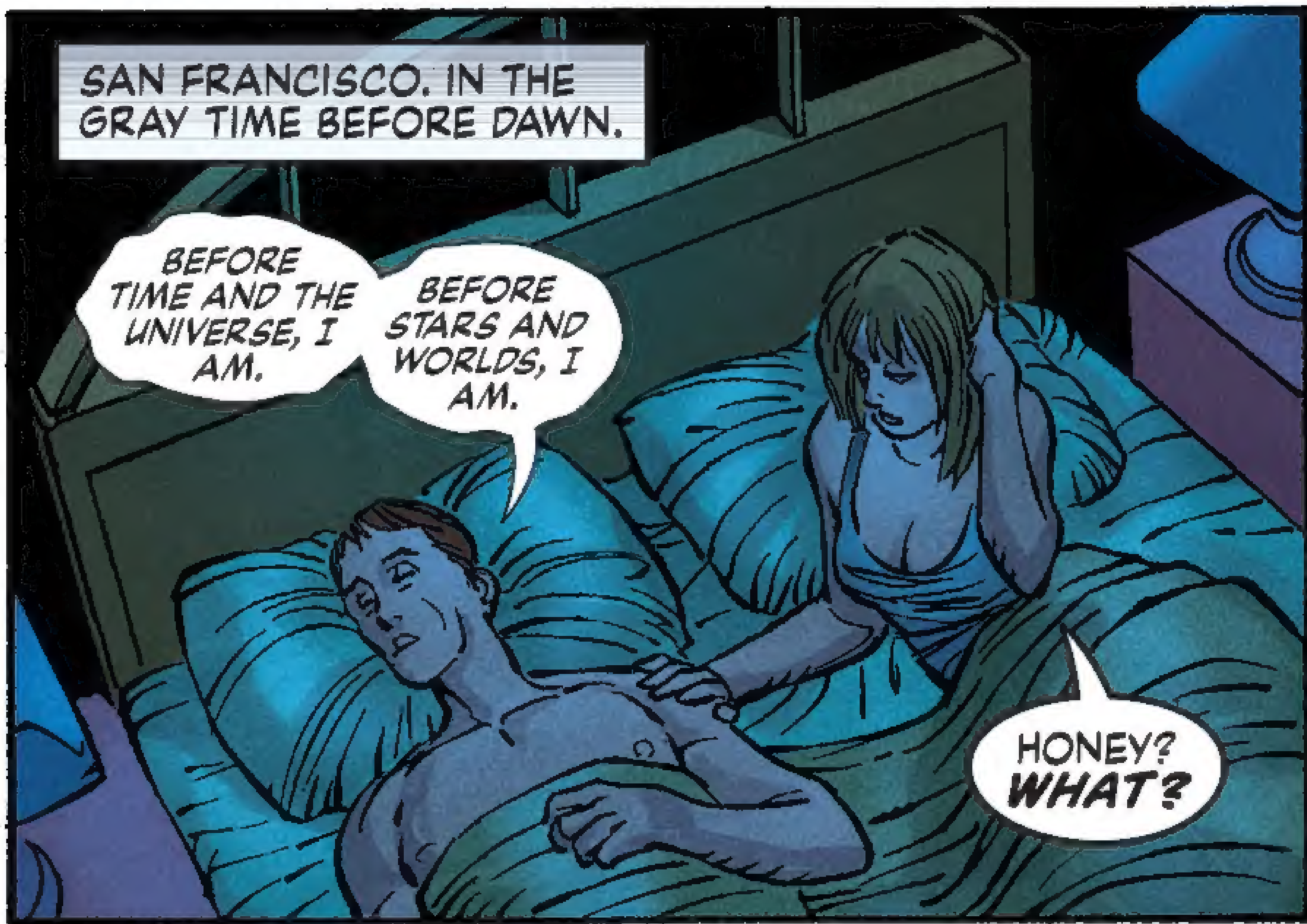
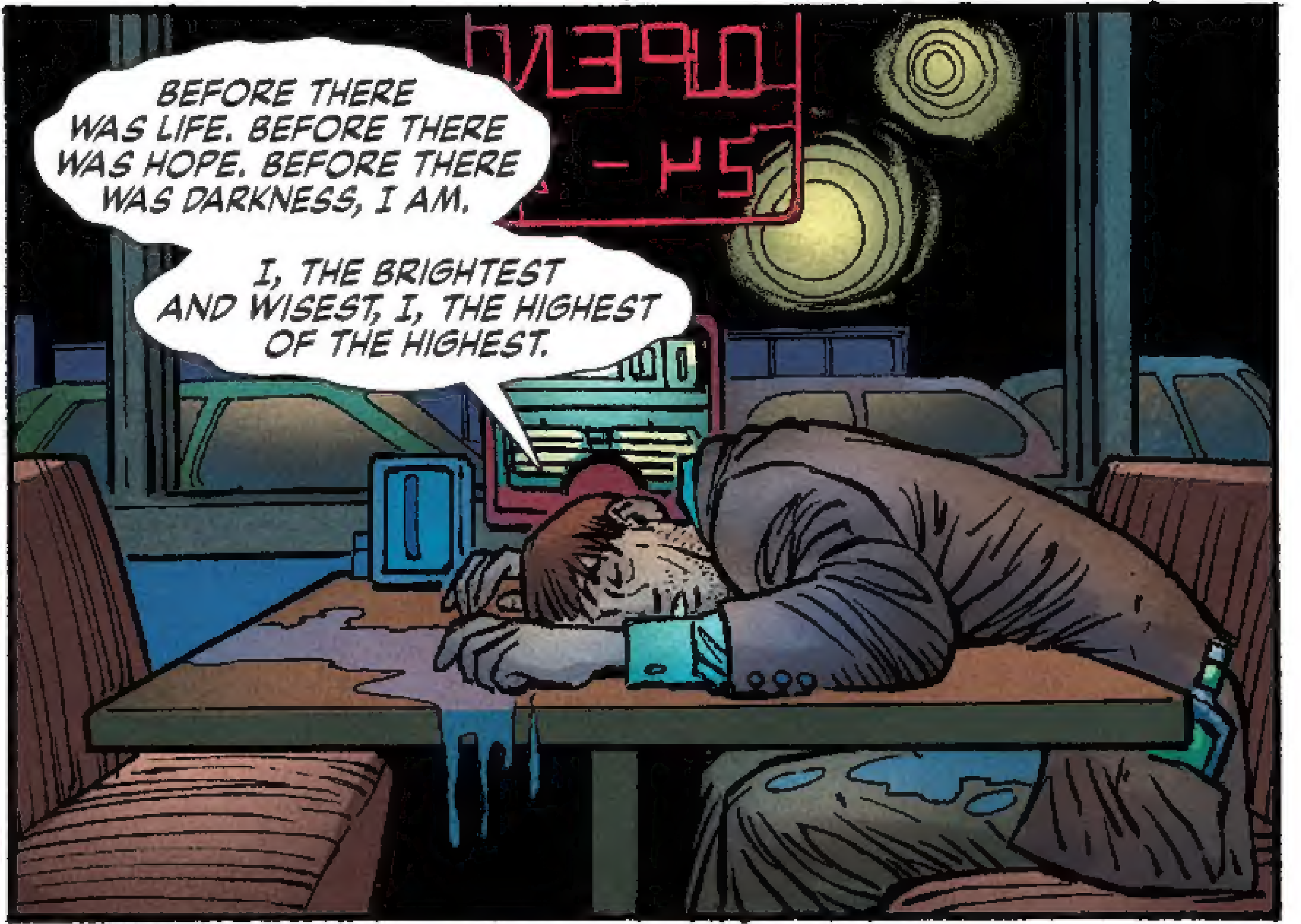
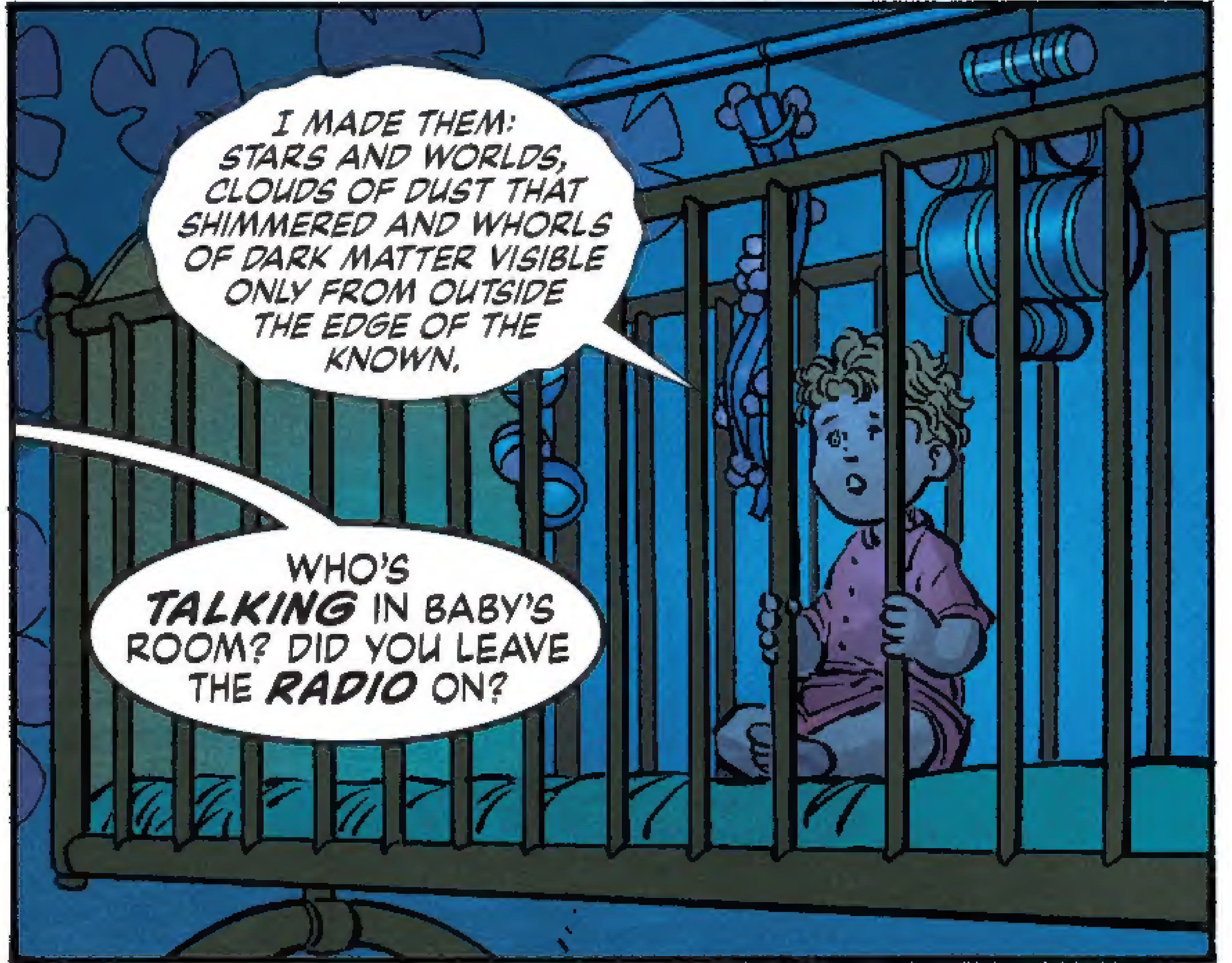
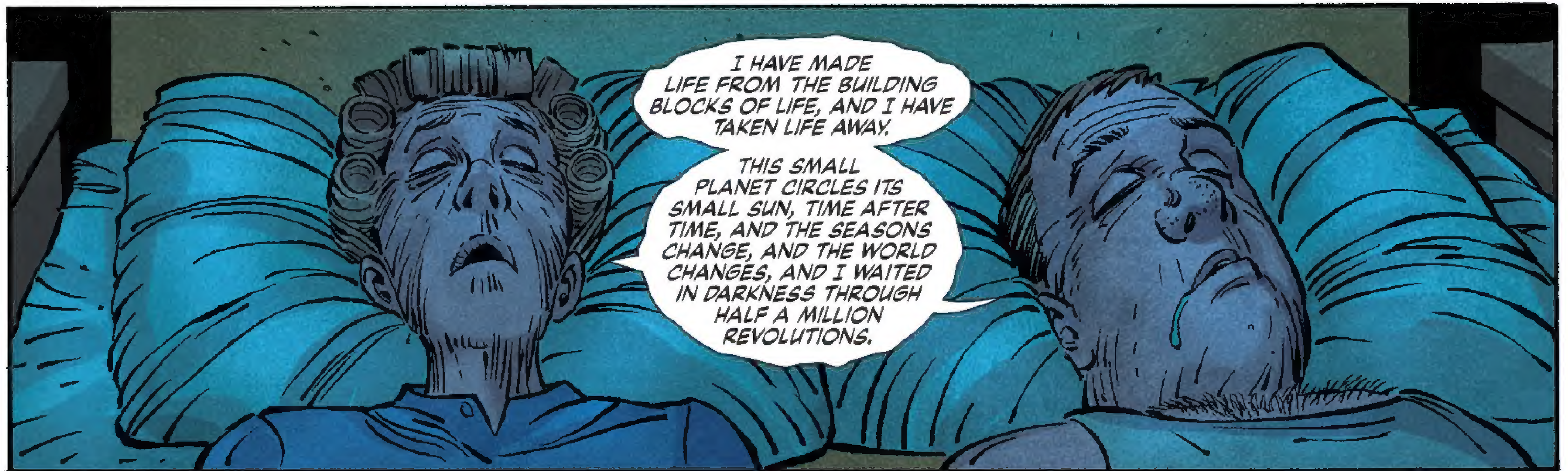

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RATED T+


SAN FRANCISCO. IN THE GRAY TIME BEFORE DAWN.
BEFORE TIME AND THE UNIVERSE, I AM.
BEFORE STARS AND WORLDS, I AM.
HONEY? WHAT?


BEFORE THERE WAS LIFE. BEFORE THERE WAS HOPE. BEFORE THERE WAS DARKNESS, I AM.
I, THE BRIGHTEST AND WISEST, I, THE HIGHEST OF THE HIGHEST.


MY ESSENCE, THE MOST POWERFUL. MY CASING, GOLDEN, GOLDEN.
WHEN I SPOKE, WORLDS LISTENED, AND WHEN I WAS SILENT, THE SOLAR WINDS DID NOT BLOW FOR FEAR THEY MIGHT DISTURB MY THOUGHTS.


I MADE THEM: STARS AND WORLDS, CLOUDS OF DUST THAT SHIMMERED AND WHORLS OF DARK MATTER VISIBLE ONLY FROM OUTSIDE THE EDGE OF THE KNOWN.
WHO'S TALKING IN BABY'S ROOM? DID YOU LEAVE THE RADIO ON?


I HAVE MADE LIFE FROM THE BUILDING BLOCKS OF LIFE, AND I HAVE TAKEN LIFE AWAY.
THIS SMALL PLANET CIRCLES ITS SMALL SUN, TIME AFTER TIME, AND THE SEASONS CHANGE, AND THE WORLD CHANGES, AND I WAITED IN DARKNESS THROUGH HALF A MILLION REVOLUTIONS.

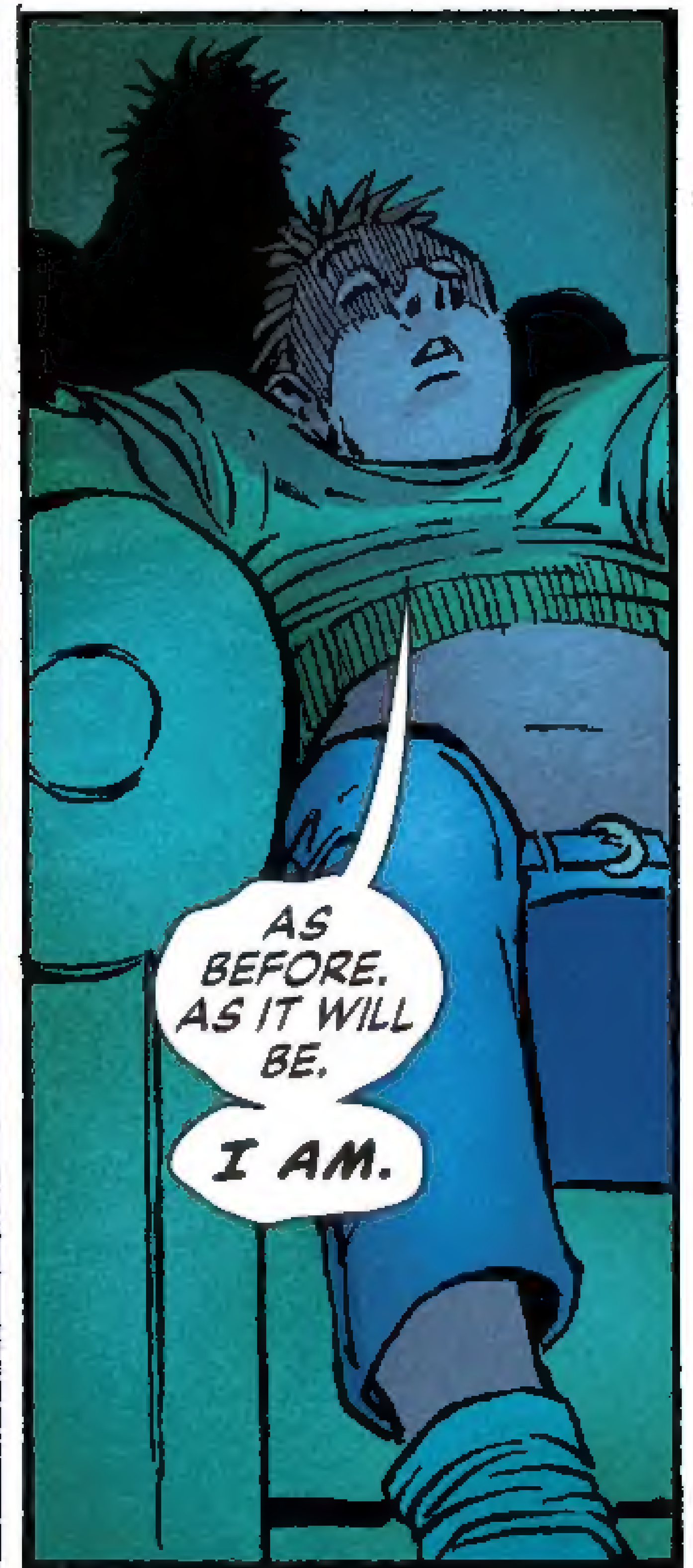

AND I HAVE DREAMED.


AND I HAVE DREAMED SUCH DREAMS.


BUT NOW.
BUT NOW.


THE DREAM IS OVER.

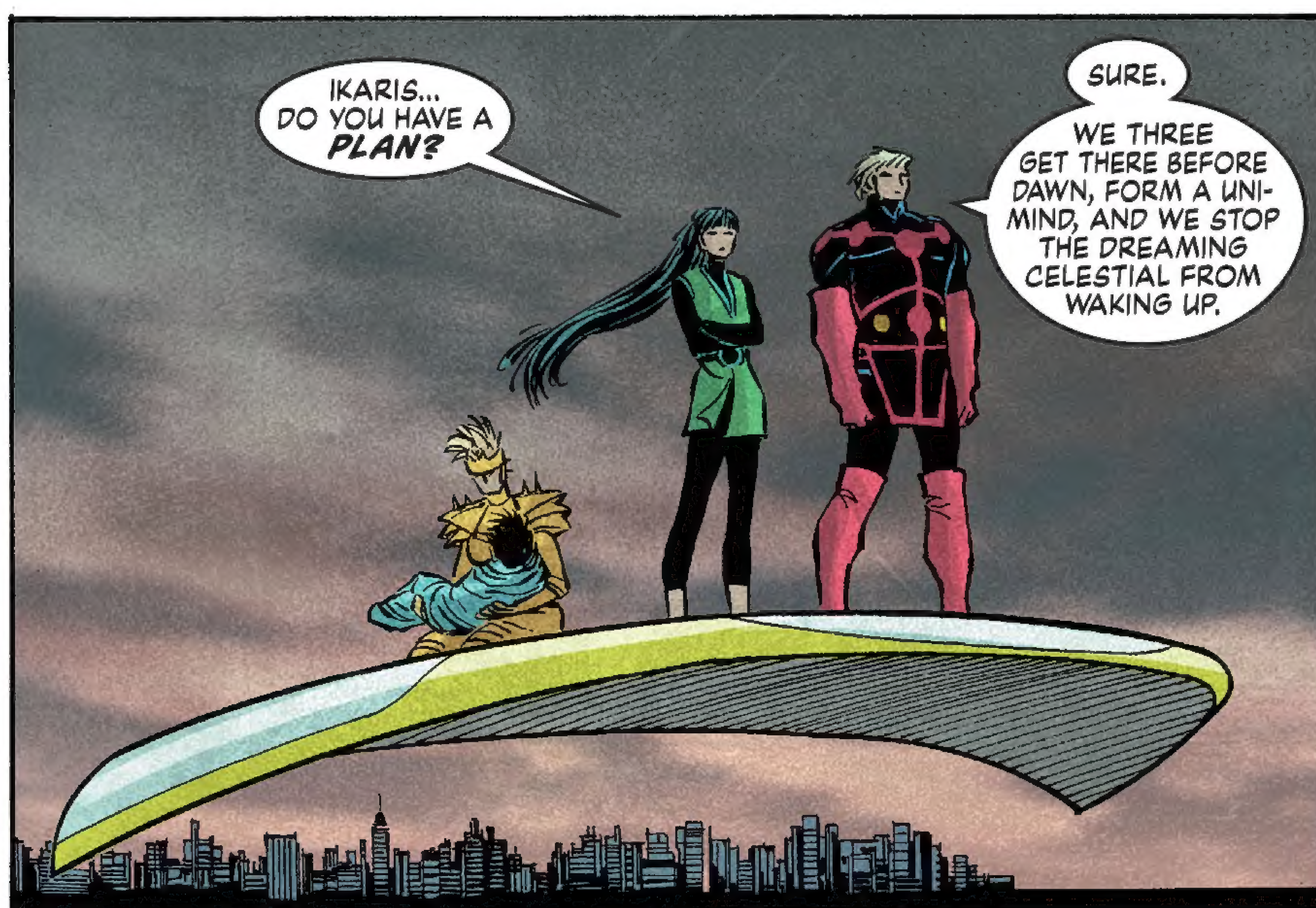

ONCE AGAIN.

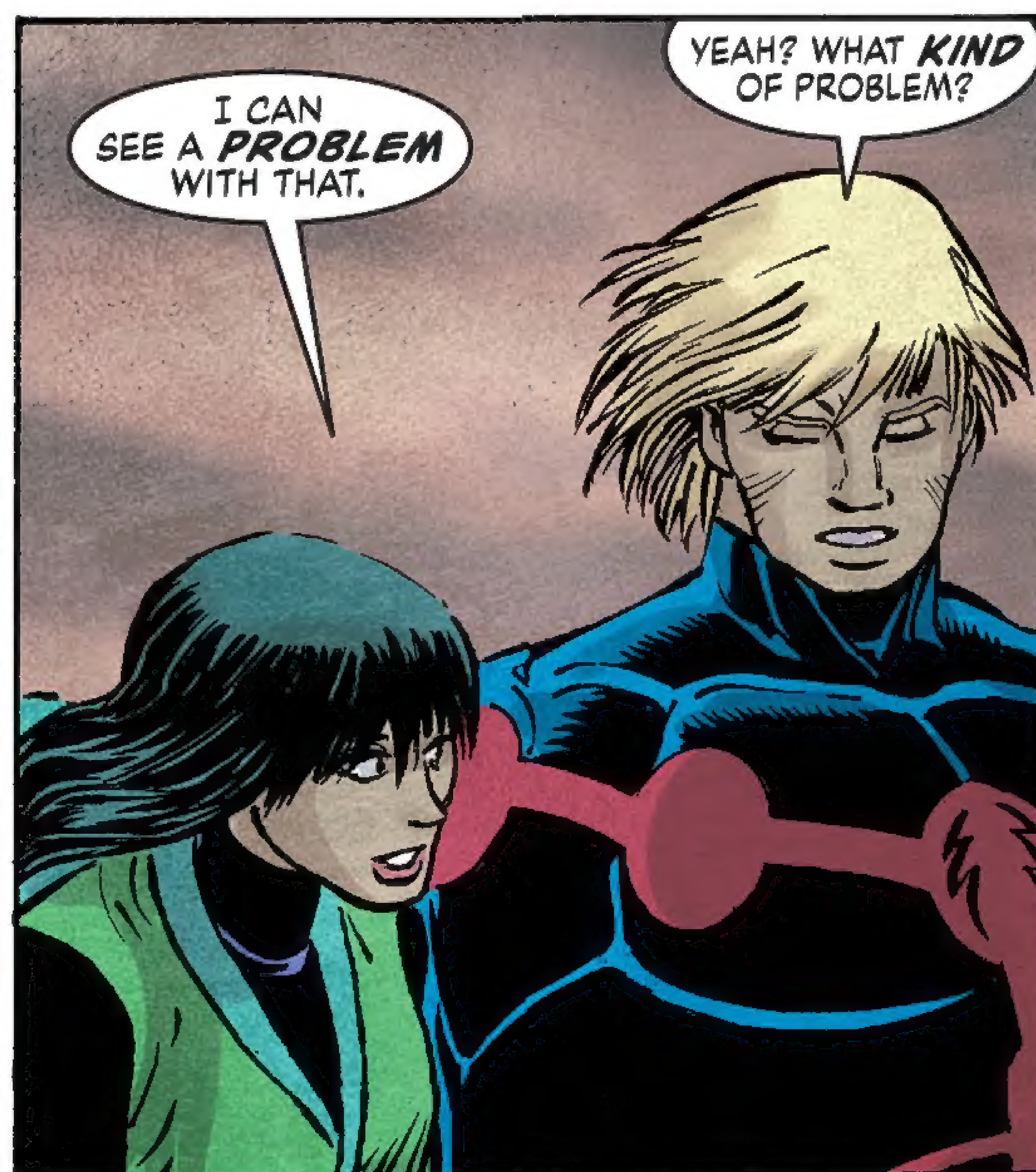

AS BEFORE. AS IT WILL BE.
I AM.

THE GRAY TIME JUST BEFORE DAWN, AND IT FEELS LIKE THE WORLD IS HOLDING ITS BREATH...

...AND THEY WAIT. THE CREATURES FROM YOUR NIGHTMARES, THE FALLEN MAN-WHO-IS-NOT-A-MAN, AND THE MILLION-YEAR-OLD BOY...

...THERE AWAIT VISITORS...

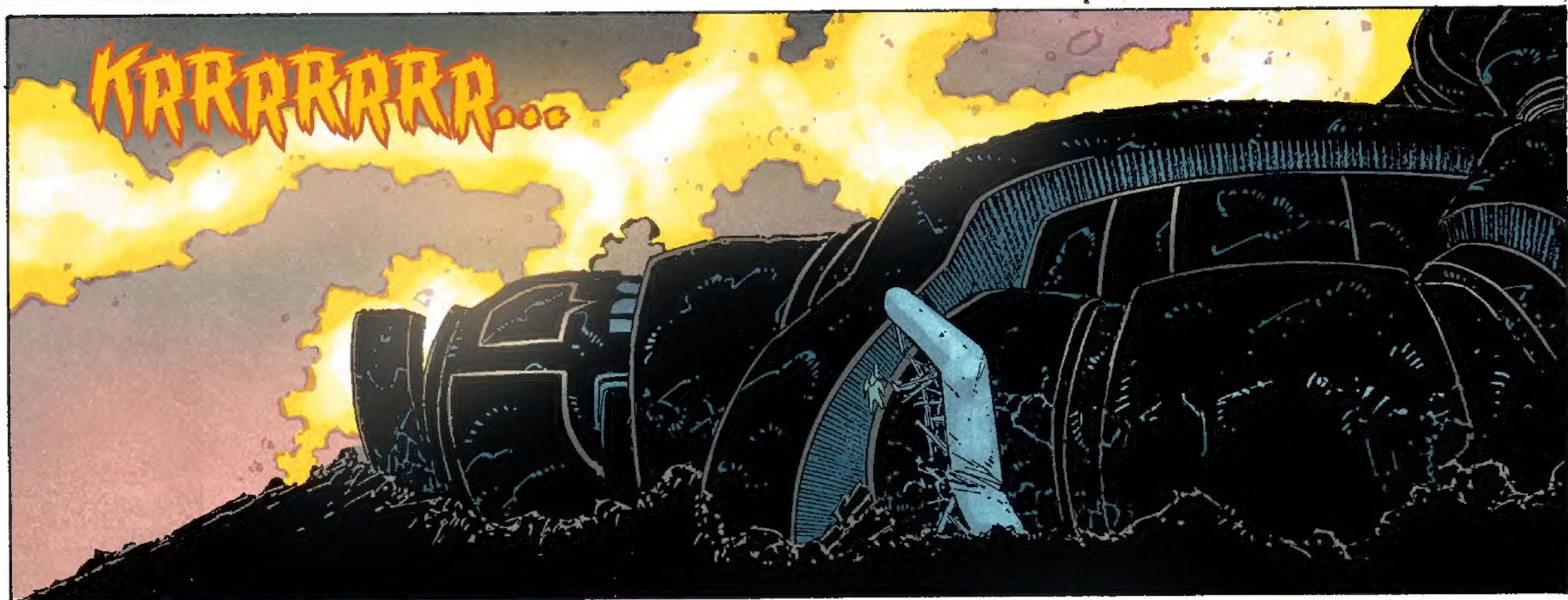








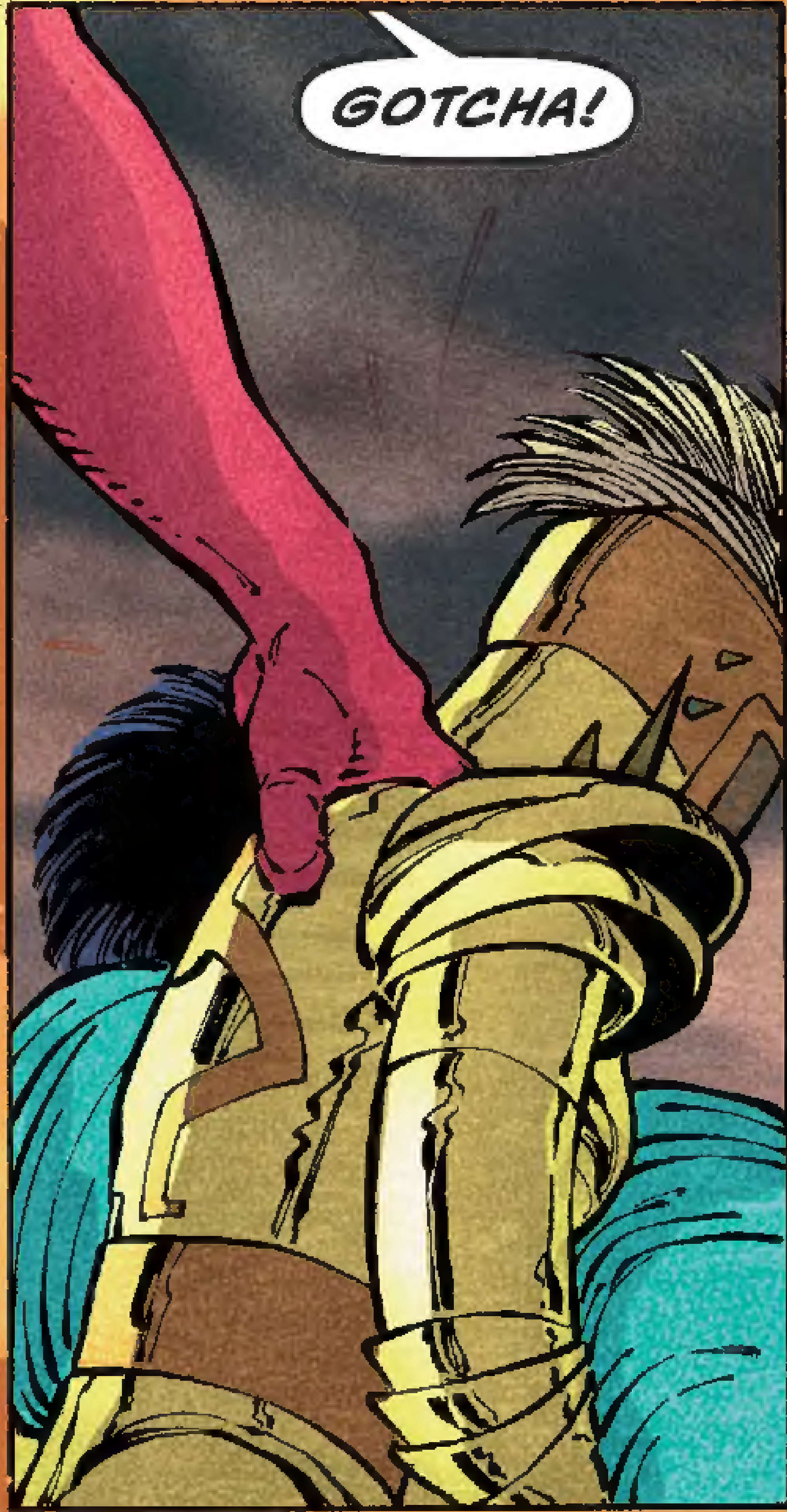




KKRZZUUUM!
AUTOMATIC DEFENSE SYSTEM.
WHAT?

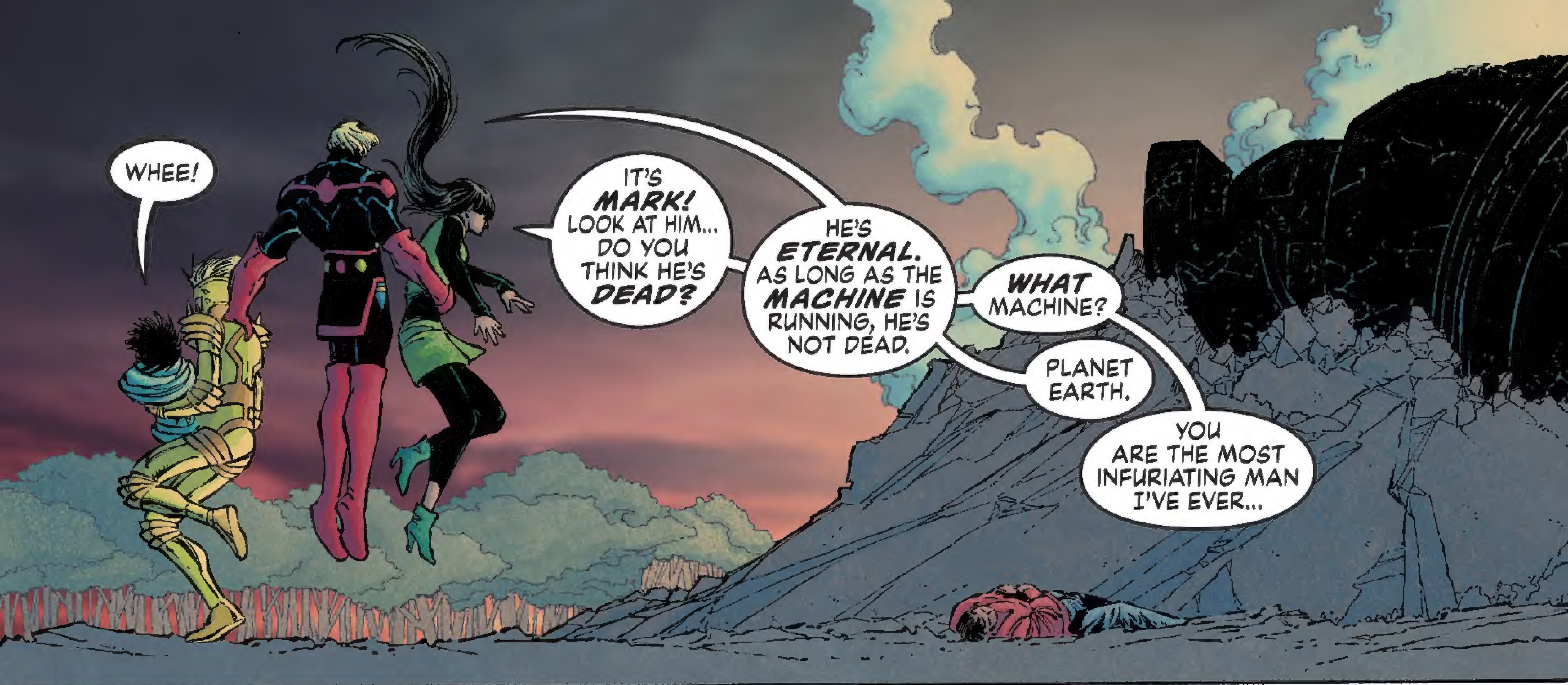
THENA! CAN YOU LEVITATE?
I COULDN'T FLY WELL EVEN WHEN I WAS AT FULL POWER, IKARIS.

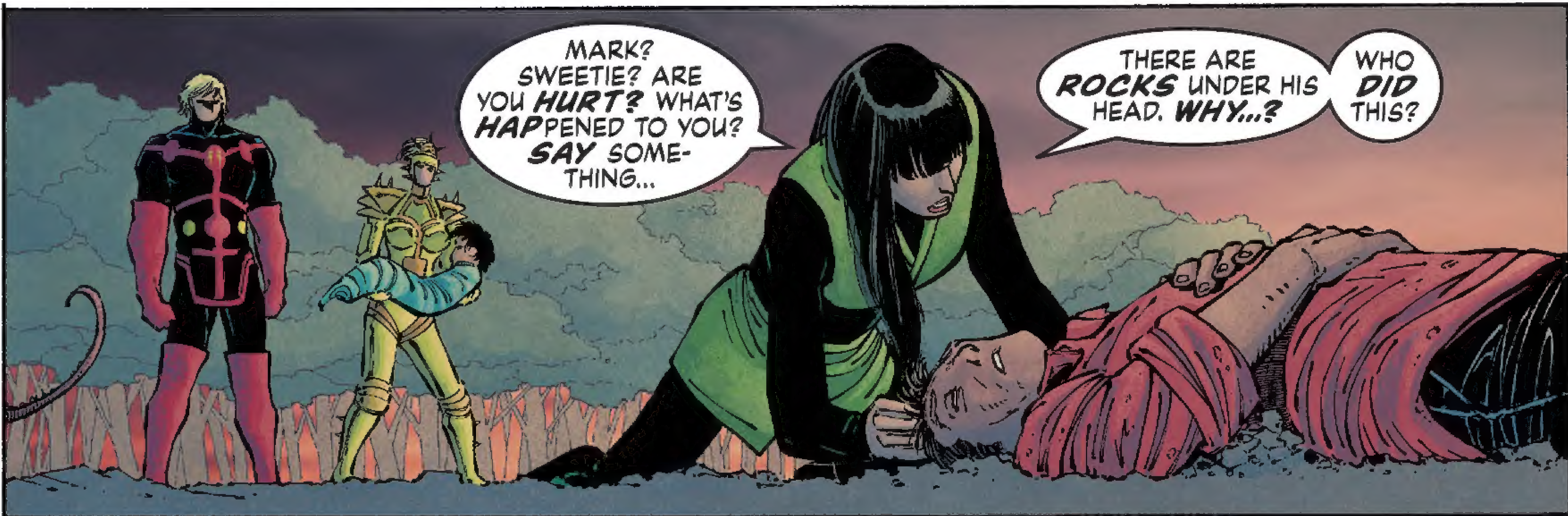


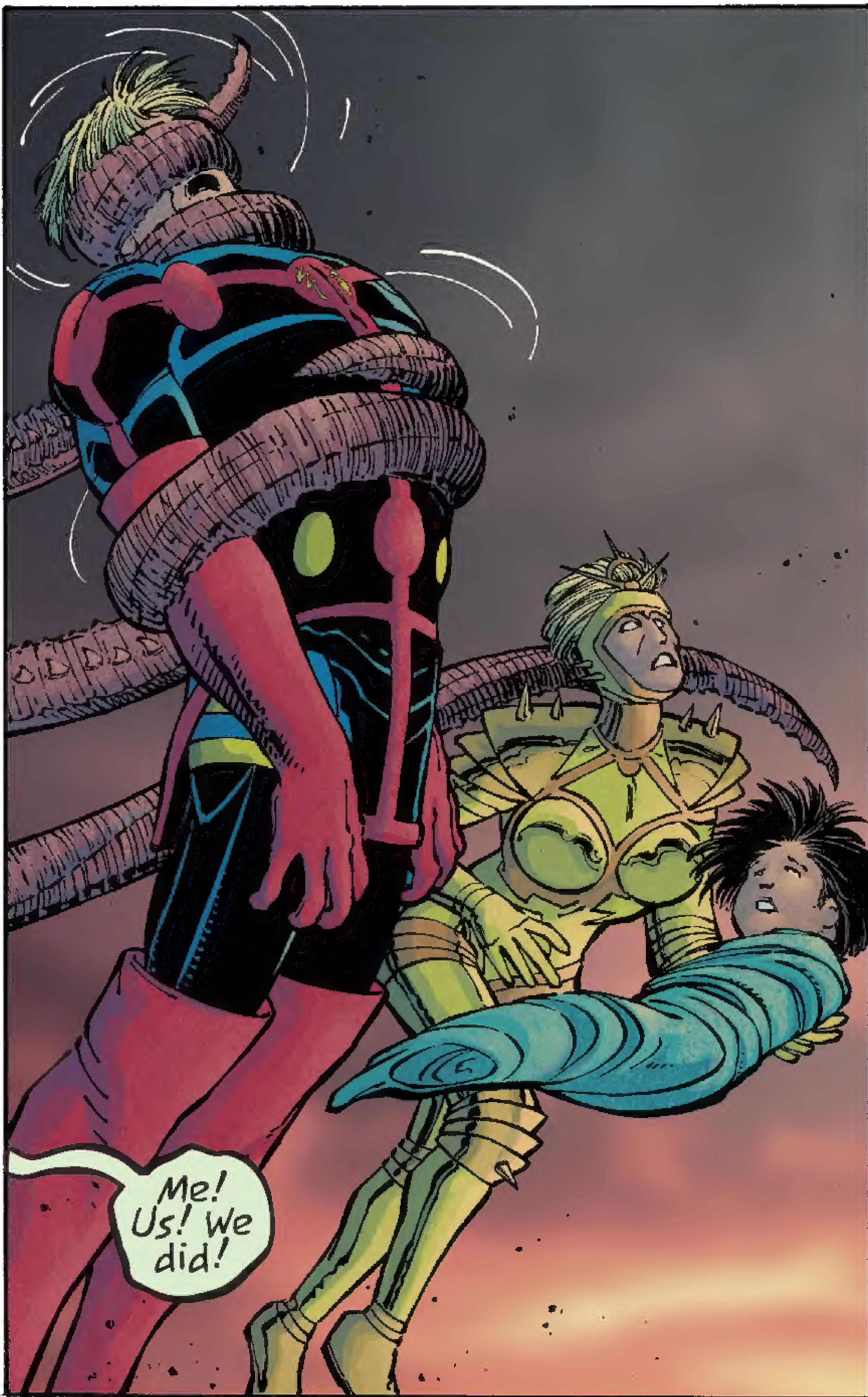




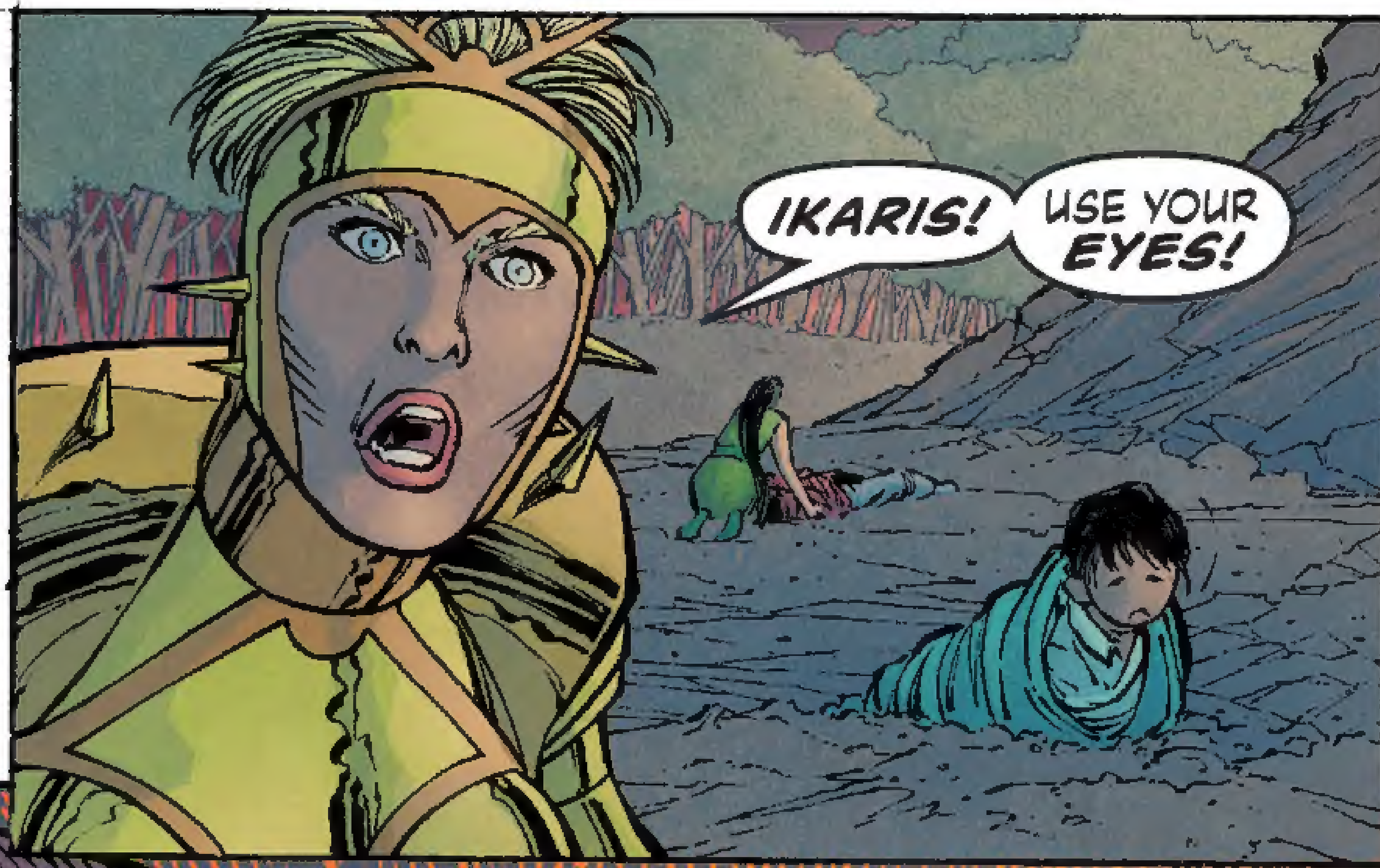



WHEE!
IT'S MARK! LOOK AT HIM... DO YOU THINK HE'S DEAD?
HE'S ETERNAL. AS LONG AS THE MACHINE IS RUNNING, HE'S NOT DEAD.
WHAT MACHINE?
PLANET EARTH.
YOU ARE THE MOST INFURIATING MAN I'VE EVER...


MARK? SWEETIE? ARE YOU HURT? WHAT'S HAPPENED TO YOU? SAY SOME-THING...
THERE ARE ROCKS UNDER HIS HEAD. WHY...?
WHO DID THIS?


Me! Us! We did!

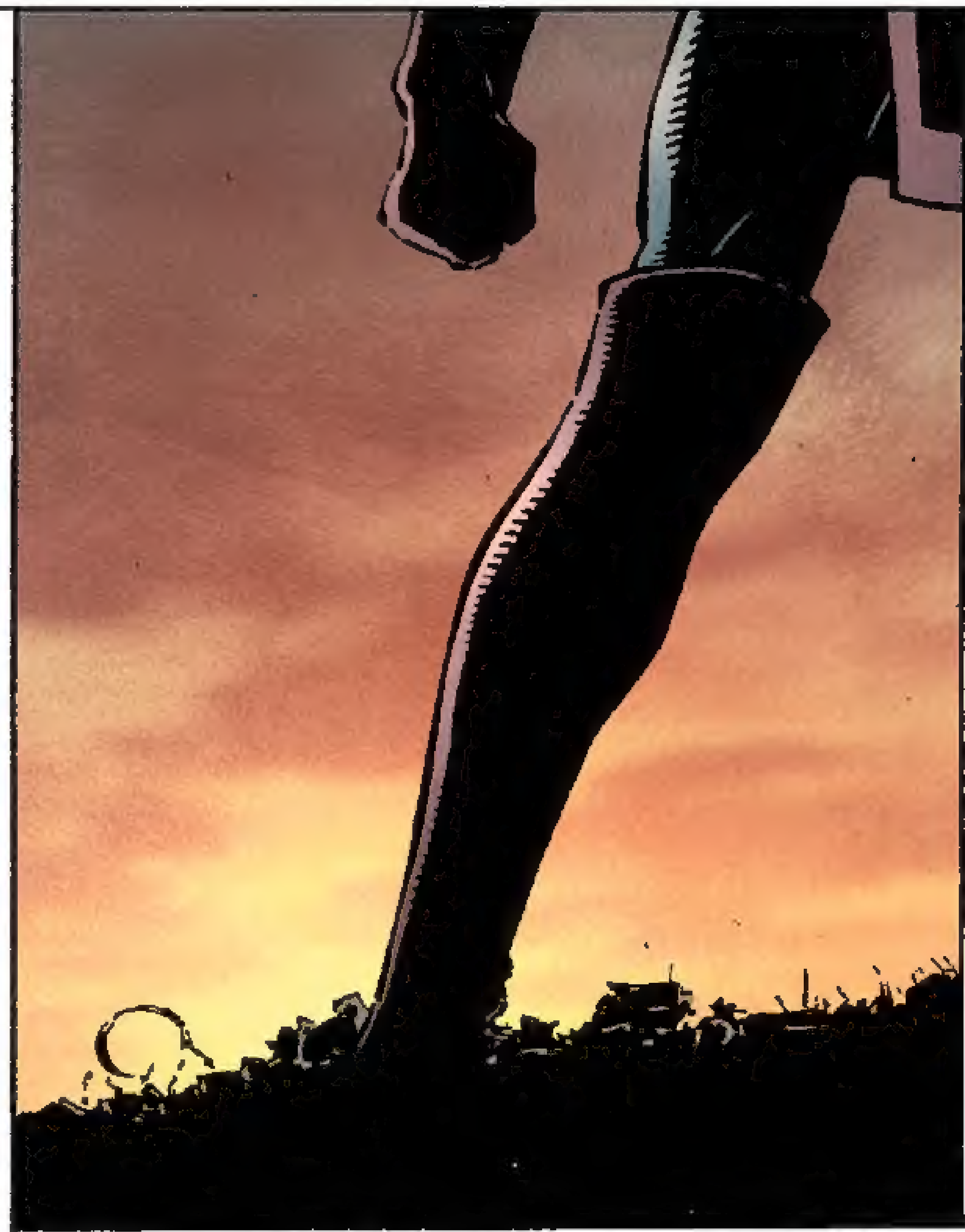
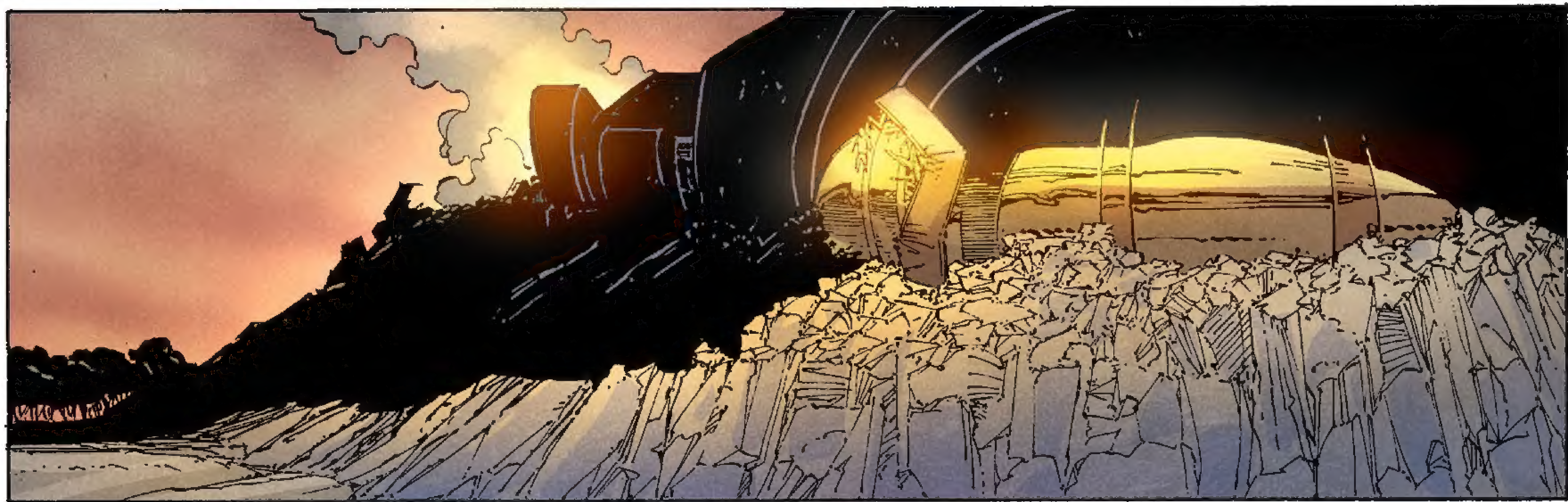
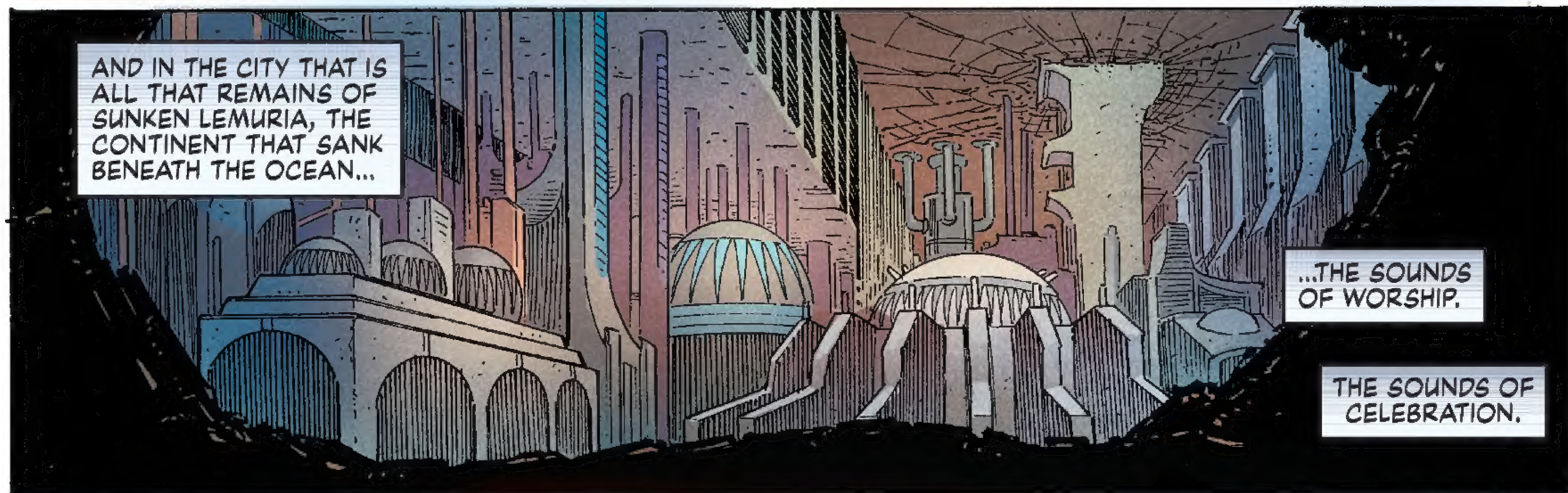
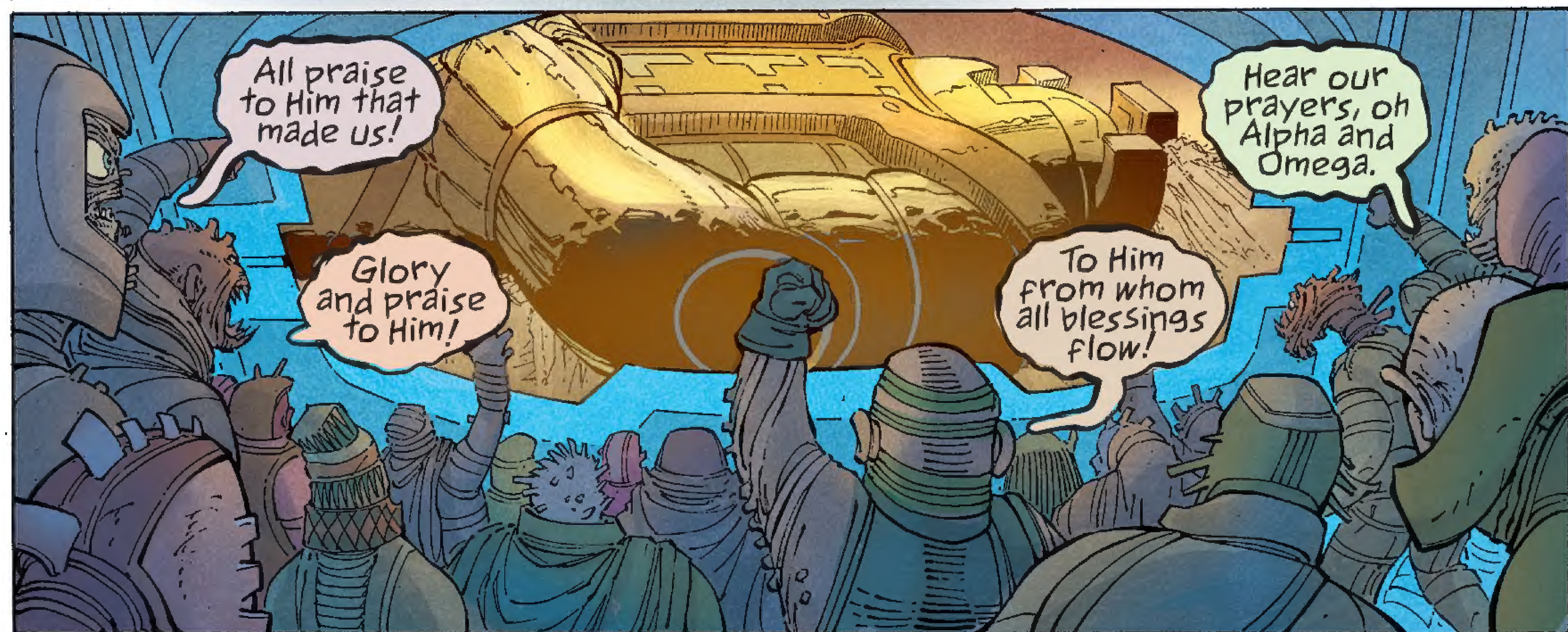

I already killed you once, Ikaris, with four arms tied behind my back.
Too easy.
Crush chest.
Crush skull.


IKARIS!
USE YOUR EYES!


GOOD... CALL...

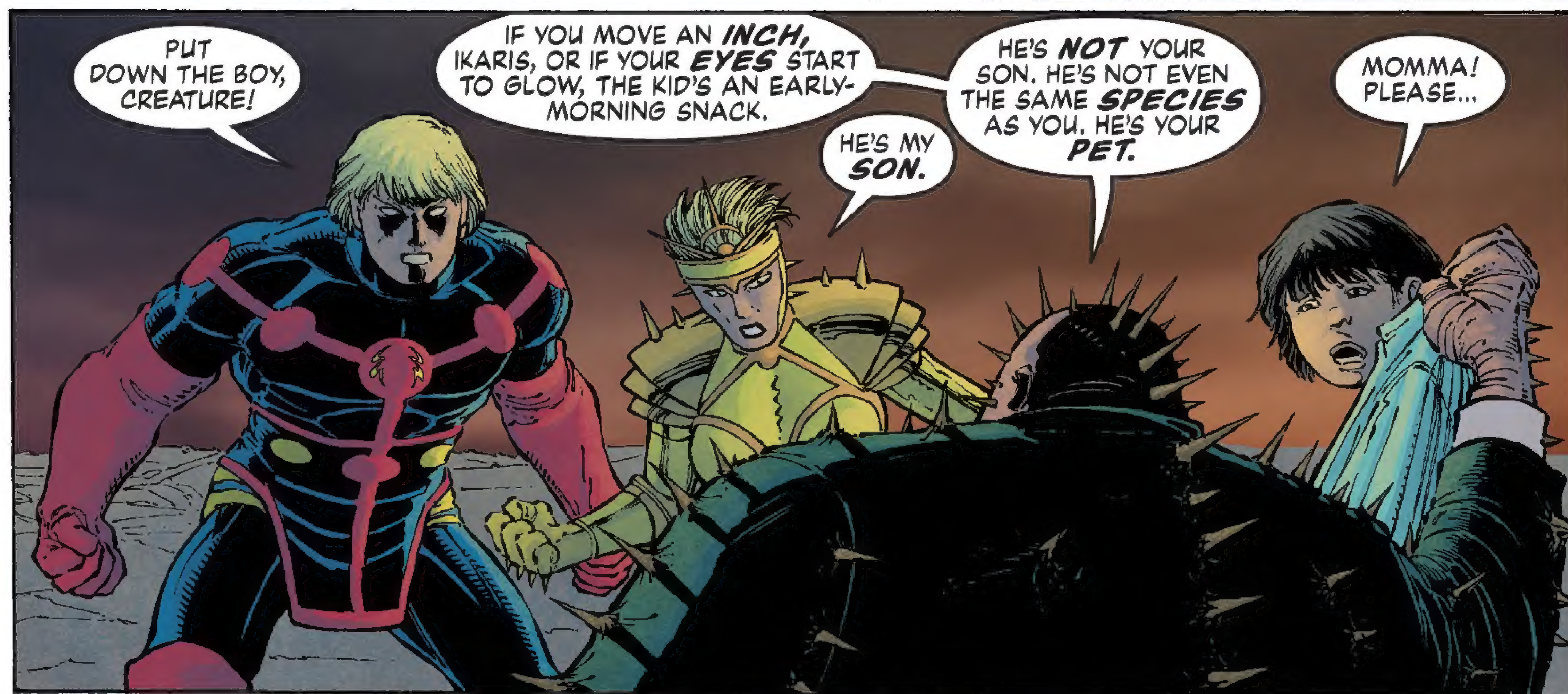
AOOWWW!

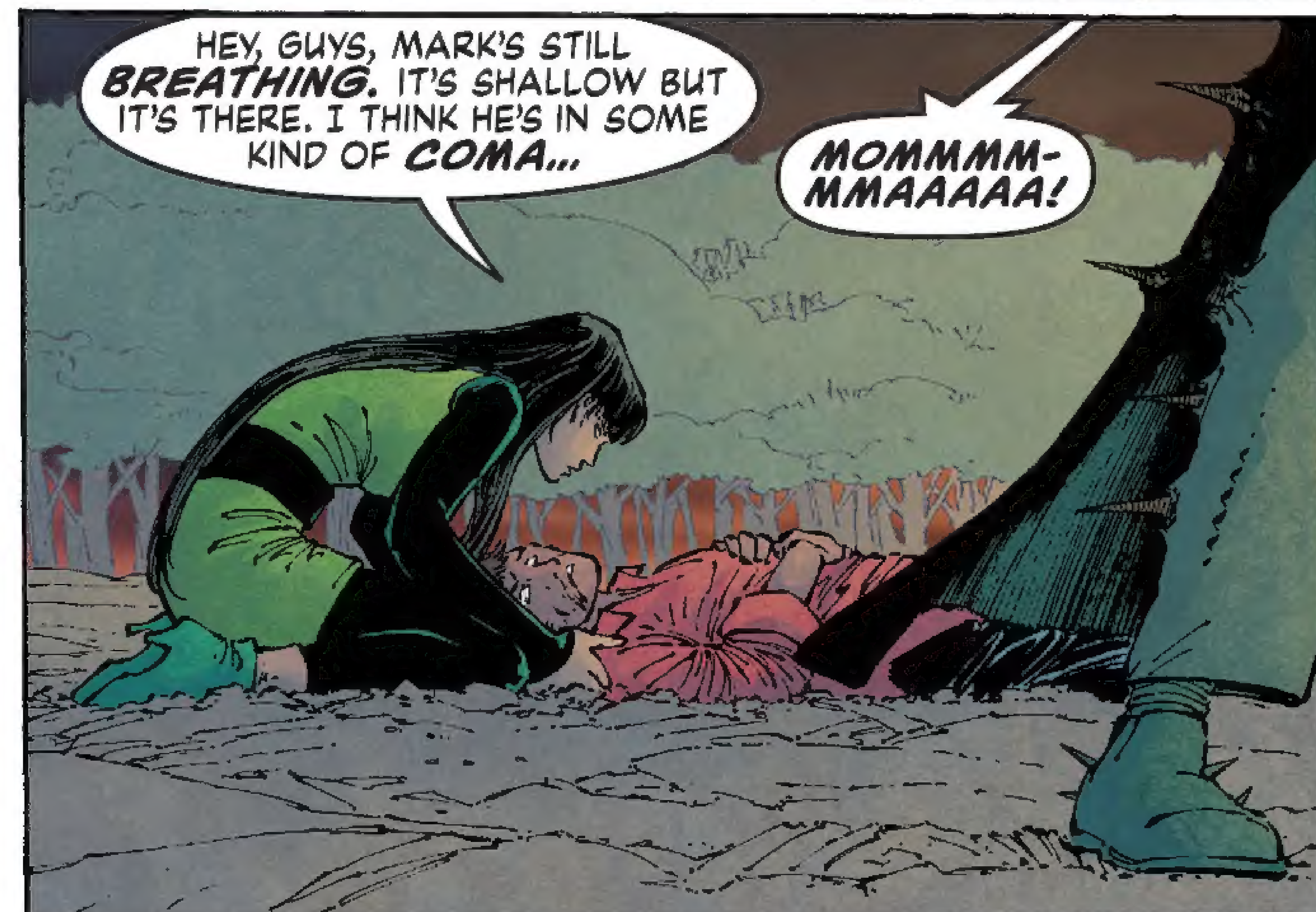

THAT WAS UNNECESSARY!
NOW, I WANT EVERYBODY TO JUST CALM DOWN, OR I WILL BE FORCED TO BITE THE BOY'S HEAD OFF.


AND THAT'S NOT JUST A FIGURE OF SPEECH.
LET'S JUST EVERYBODY WAIT FOR THE SUN TO COME UP LIKE GOOD BOYS AND GIRLS. YES?



AND IN THE CITY THAT IS ALL THAT REMAINS OF SUNKEN LEMURIA, THE CONTINENT THAT SANK BENEATH THE OCEAN...
...THE SOUNDS OF WORSHIP.
THE SOUNDS OF CELEBRATION.

All praise to Him that made us!
Glory and praise to Him!
To Him from whom all blessings flow!
Hear our prayers, oh Alpha and Omega.

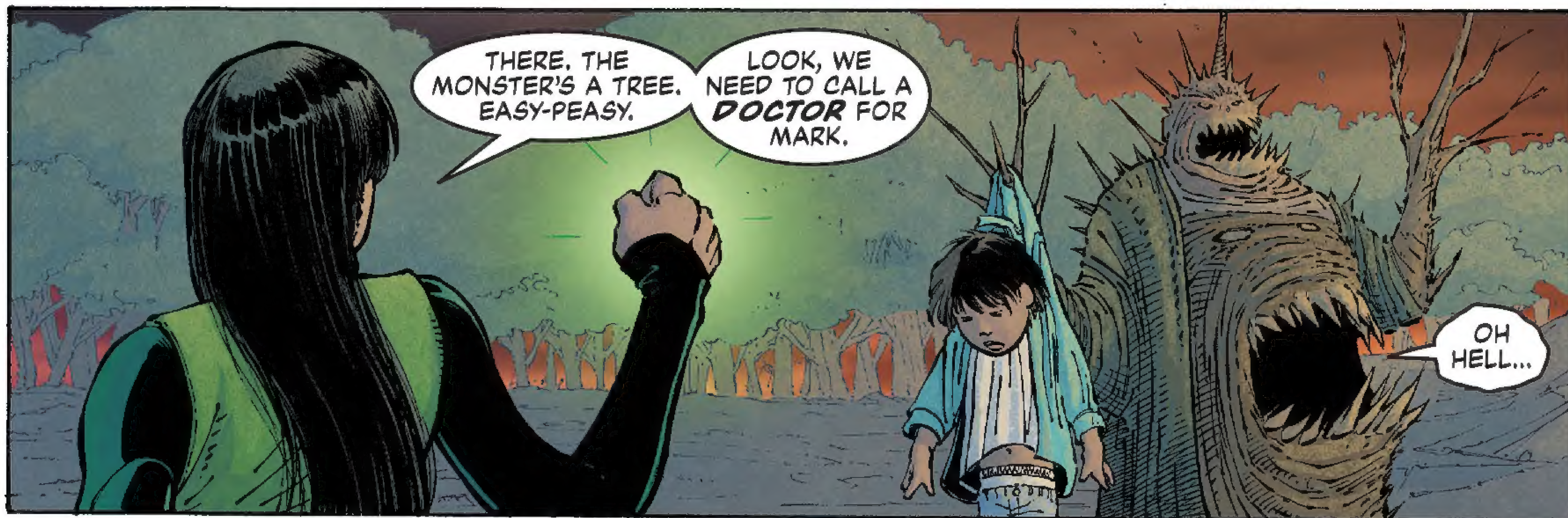

Is this not the greatest of days, Your Majesty? All we have worked and prayed for is coming to pass, before our eyes...
Do not eat your human before he is trapped, Dzyan.
No, Majesty. Yet, still, He wakes! Praise Him! PRAISE HIM!




PUT DOWN THE BOY, CREATURE!
IF YOU MOVE AN INCH, IKARIS, OR IF YOUR EYES START TO GLOW, THE KID'S AN EARLY-MORNING SNACK.
HE'S MY SON.
HE'S NOT YOUR SON. HE'S NOT EVEN THE SAME SPECIES AS YOU. HE'S YOUR PET.
MOMMA! PLEASE...

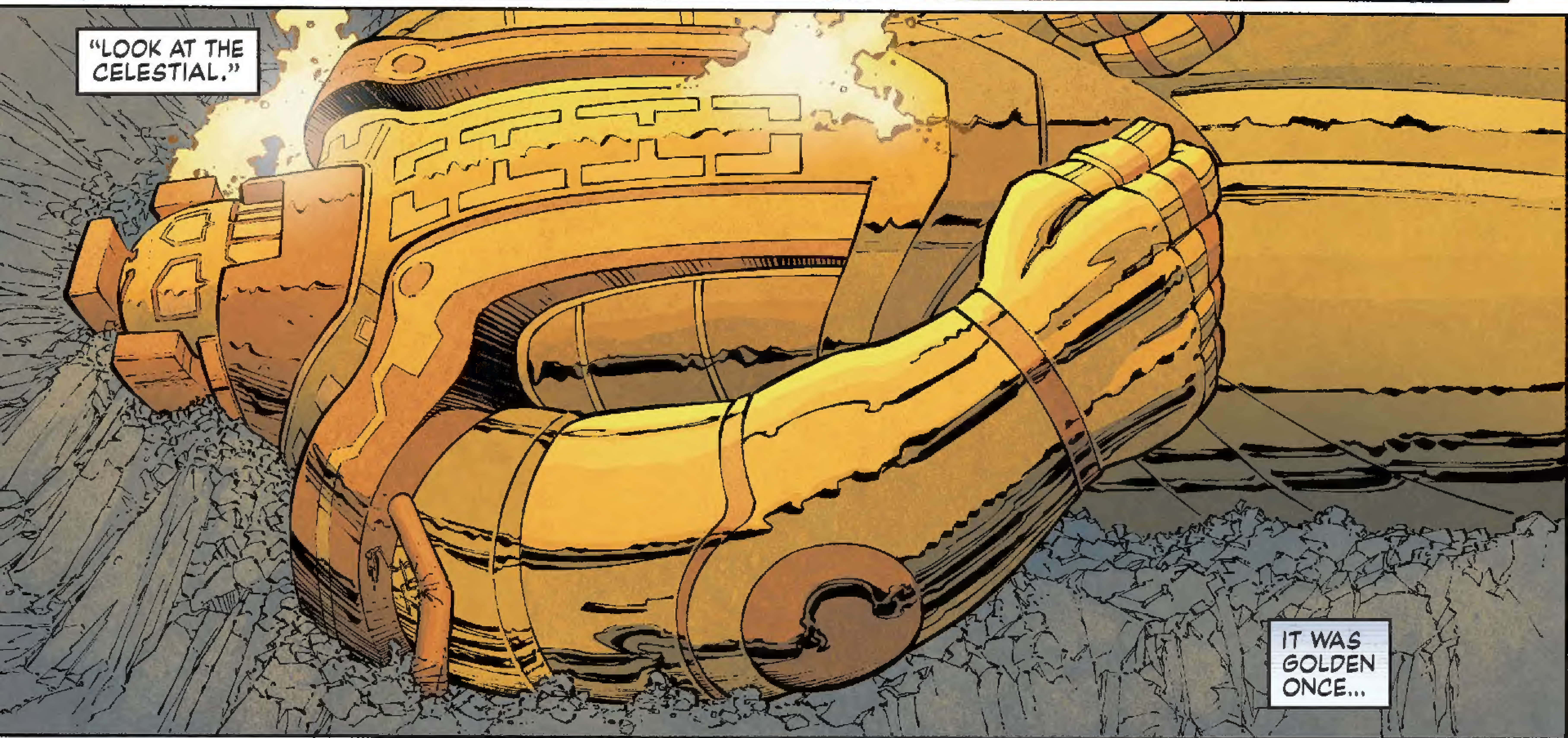

HEY, GUYS, MARK'S STILL BREATHING. IT'S SHALLOW BUT IT'S THERE. I THINK HE'S IN SOME KIND OF COMA...
MOMMMM-MMAAAAAA!

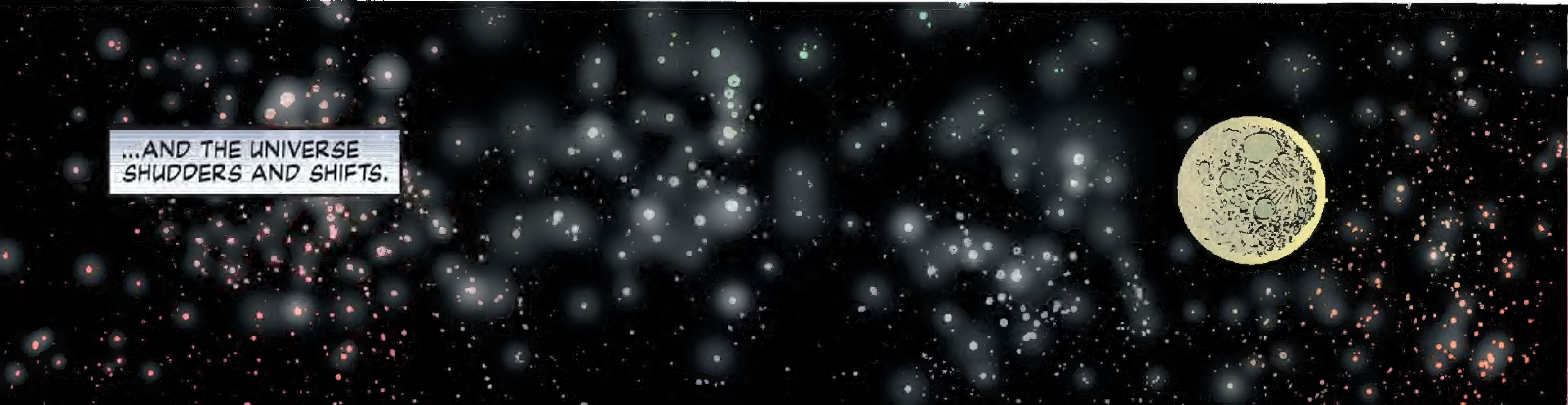

WHAT?
OH, FOR HEAVEN'S SAKE...


THERE. THE MONSTER'S A TREE. EASY-PEASY.
LOOK, WE NEED TO CALL A DOCTOR FOR MARK.
OH HELL...



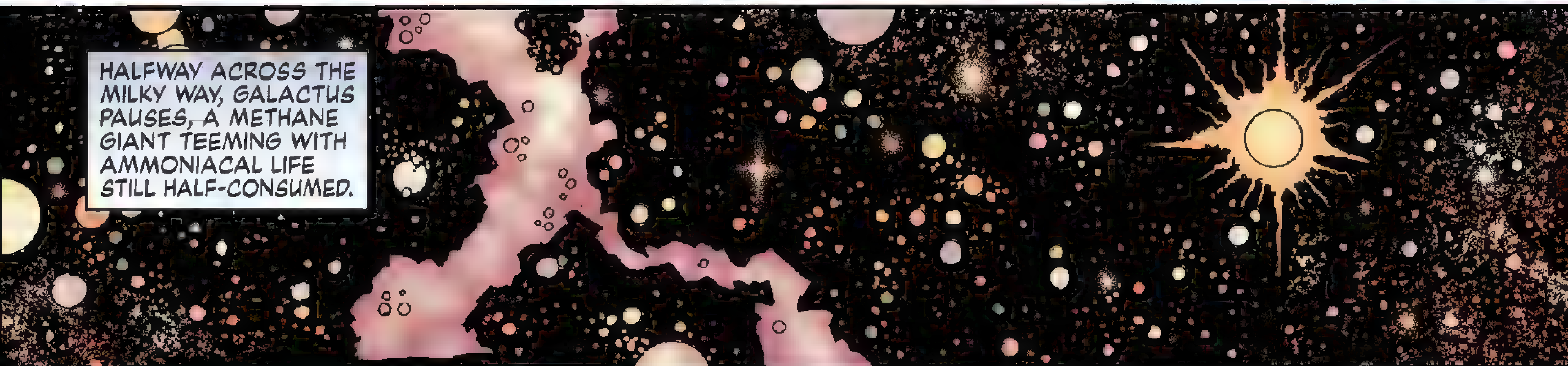

DON'T WORRY, BABY. EVERYTHING'S ALL RIGHT. MOMMA'S HERE.
EVERYTHING'S NOT ALL RIGHT, THENA.


"LOOK AT THE CELESTIAL."
IT WAS GOLDEN ONCE...

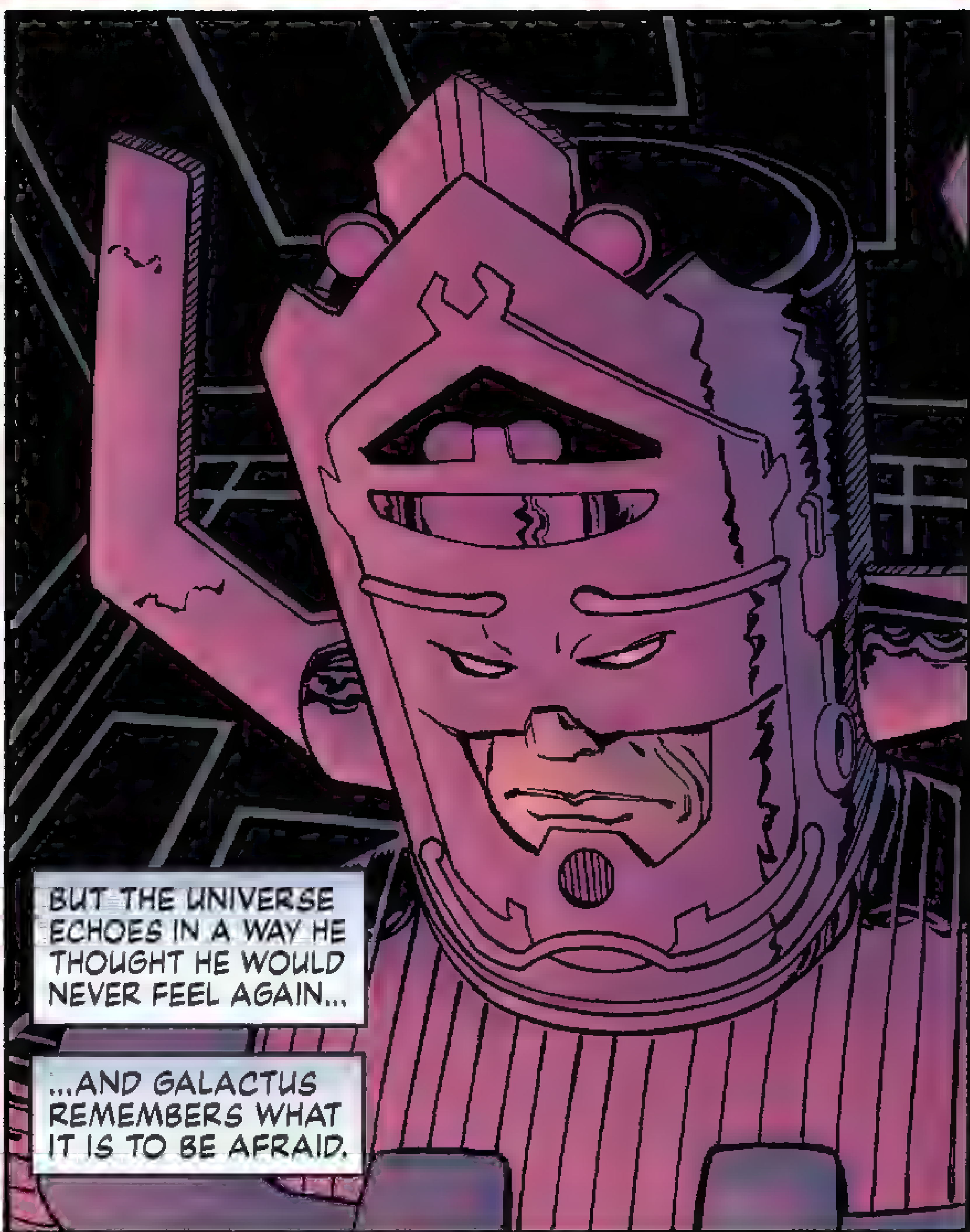

...AND THE UNIVERSE SHUDDERS AND SHIFTS.

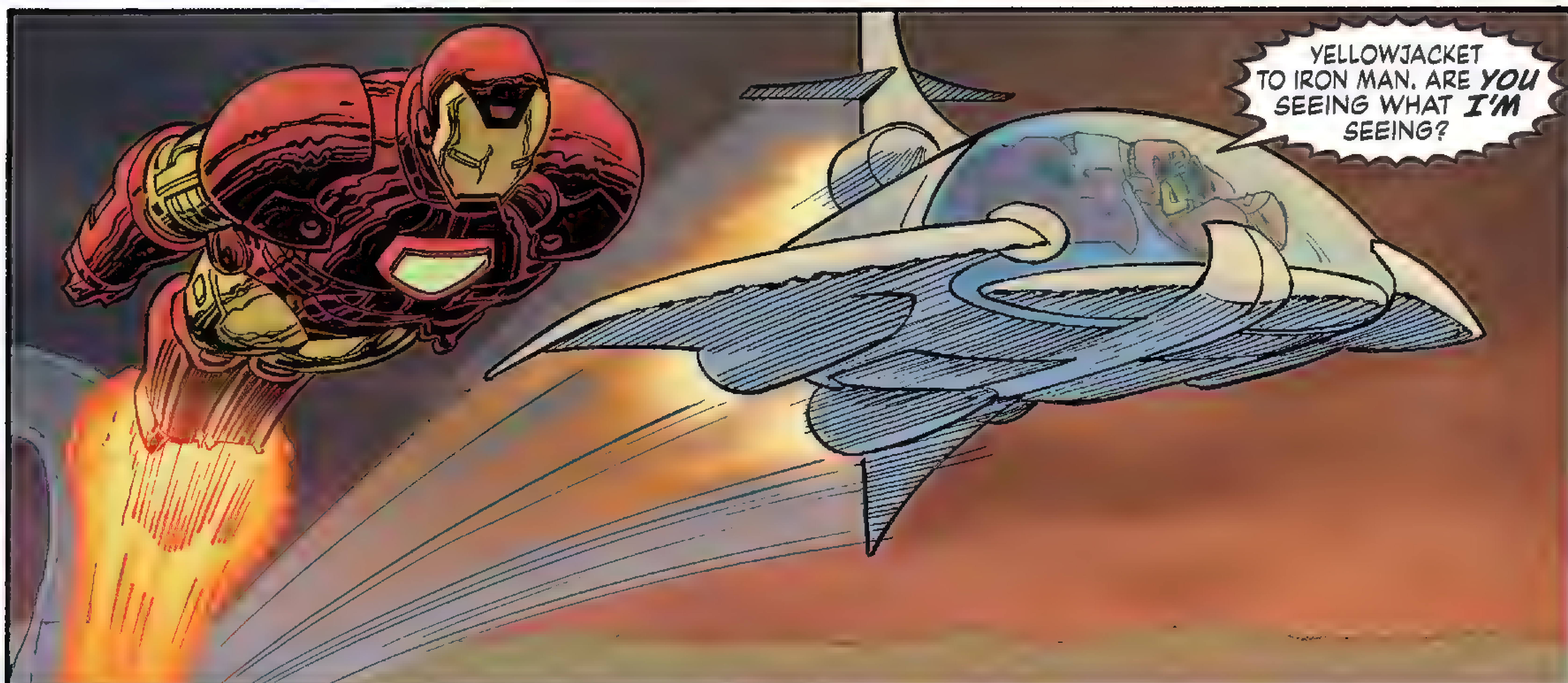

IN THE BLUE CITY, ON EARTH'S MOON, THE WATCHER FEELS THE TWIST AND TEAR IN THE COSMIC FLUX...

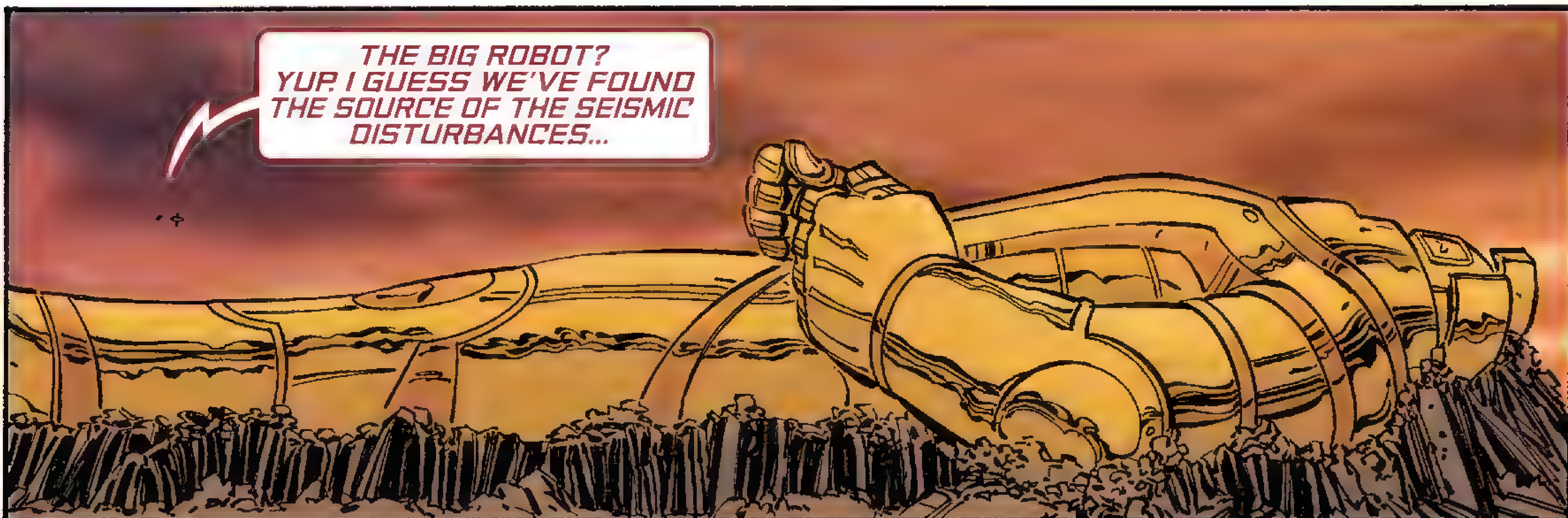

AND, IF FOR ONLY A MOMENT, HE CANNOT WATCH.

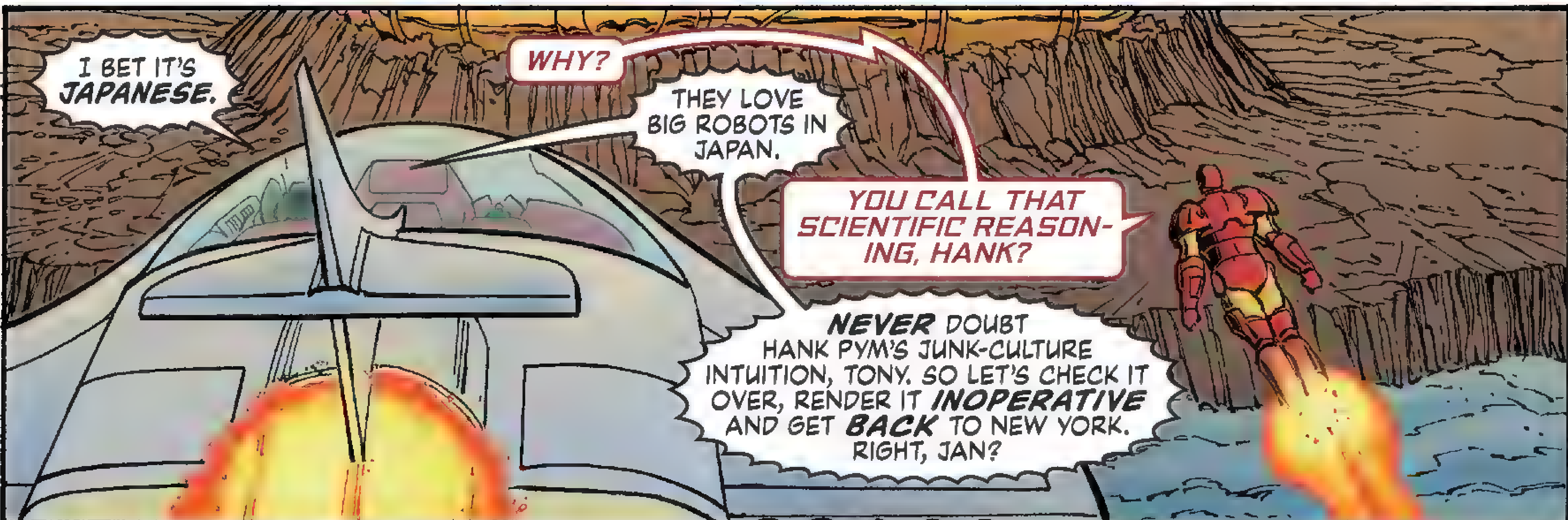

HALFWAY ACROSS THE MILKY WAY, GALACTUS PAUSES, A METHANE GIANT TEEMING WITH AMMONIACAL LIFE STILL HALF-CONSUMED.

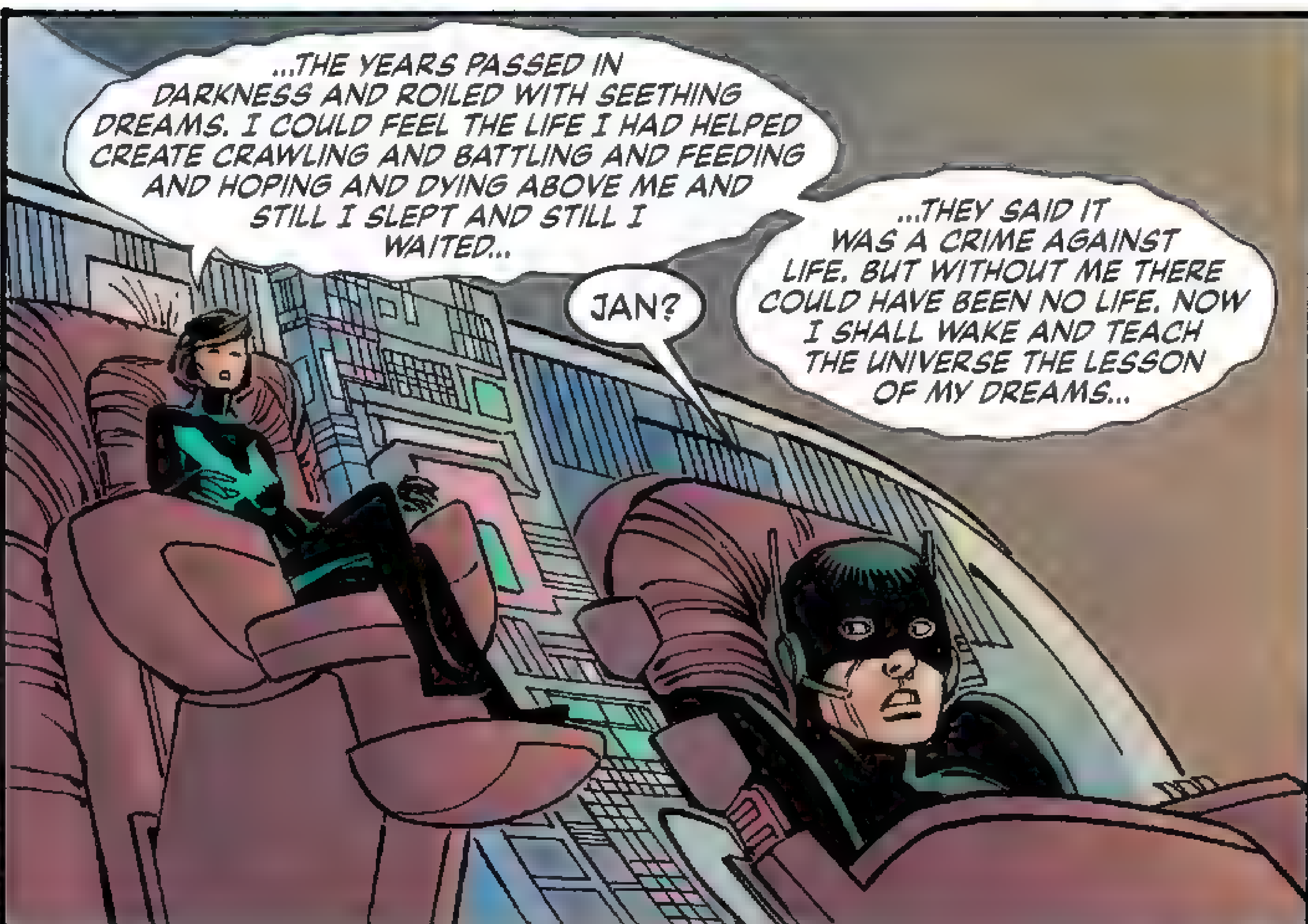

IT HAS BEEN HALF A MILLION YEARS.
HE HAD THOUGHT THE MATTER DEALT WITH AND OVER.

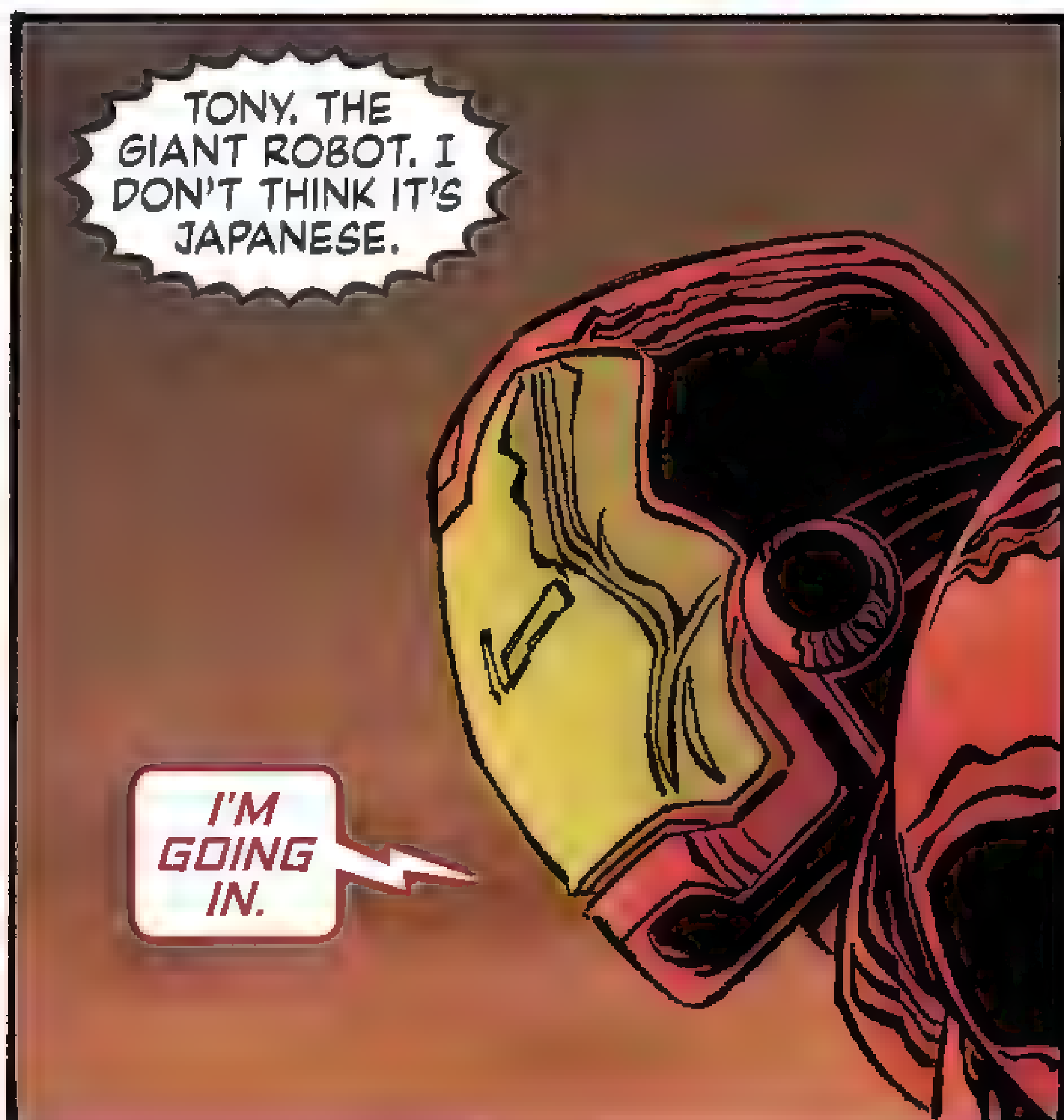

BUT THE UNIVERSE ECHOES IN A WAY HE THOUGHT HE WOULD NEVER FEEL AGAIN...
...AND GALACTUS REMEMBERS WHAT IT IS TO BE AFRAID.


YELLOWJACKET TO IRON MAN. ARE YOU SEEING WHAT I'M SEEING?

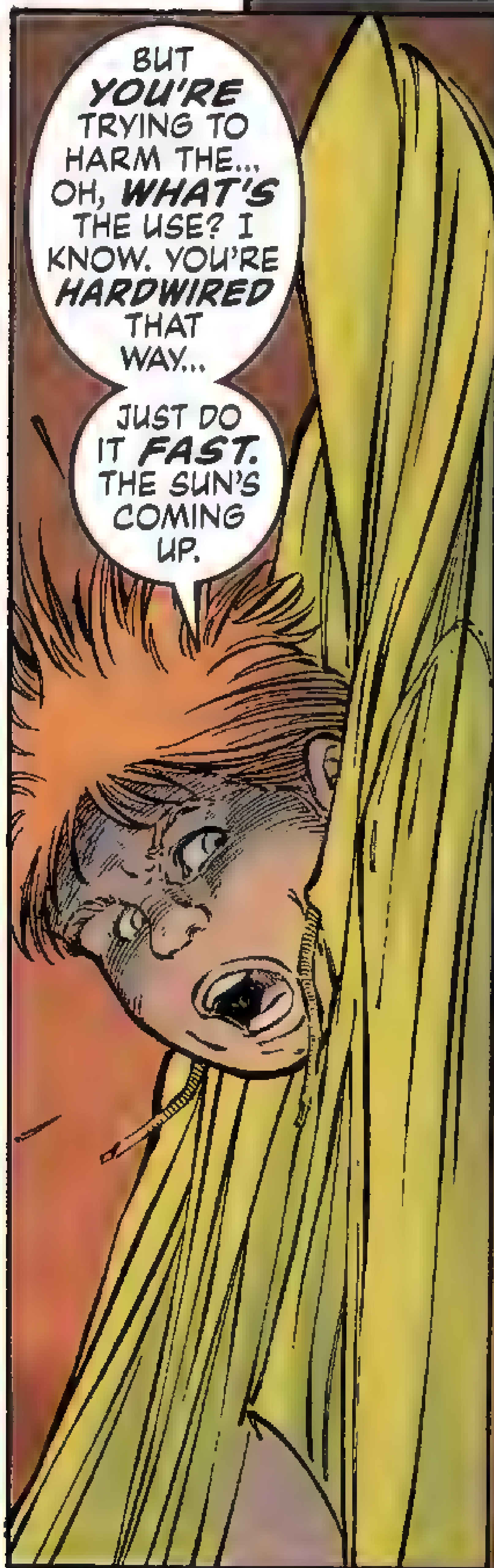

THE BIG ROBOT? YUP. I GUESS WE'VE FOUND THE SOURCE OF THE SEISMIC DISTURBANCES...


I BET IT'S JAPANESE.
WHY?
THEY LOVE BIG ROBOTS IN JAPAN.
YOU CALL THAT SCIENTIFIC REASON-ING, HANK?
NEVER DOUBT HANK PYM'S JUNK-CULTURE INTUITION, TONY. SO LET'S CHECK IT OVER, RENDER IT INOPERATIVE AND GET BACK TO NEW YORK. RIGHT, JAN?


...THE YEARS PASSED IN DARKNESS AND ROILED WITH SEETHING DREAMS. I COULD FEEL THE LIFE I HAD HELPED CREATE CRAWLING AND BATTLING AND FEEDING AND HOPING AND DYING ABOVE ME AND STILL I SLEPT AND STILL I WAITED...
JAN?
...THEY SAID IT WAS A CRIME AGAINST LIFE. BUT WITHOUT ME THERE COULD HAVE BEEN NO LIFE. NOW I SHALL WAKE AND TEACH THE UNIVERSE THE LESSON OF MY DREAMS...

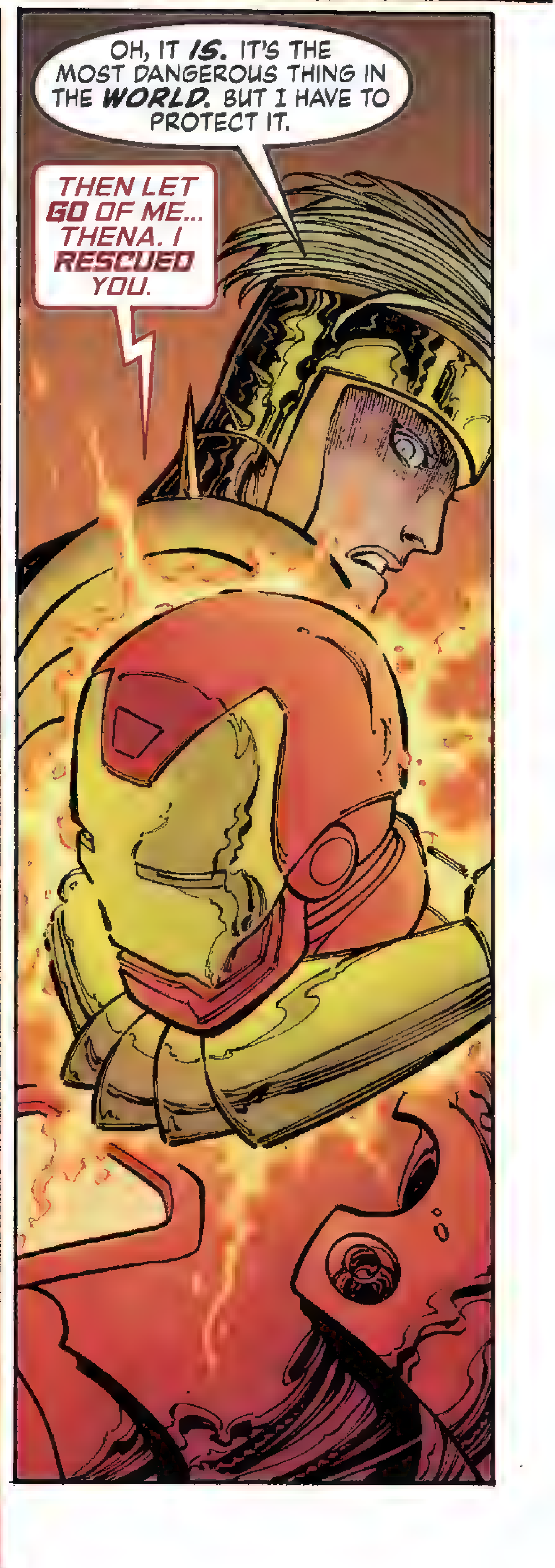

TONY. THE GIANT ROBOT. I DON'T THINK IT'S JAPANESE.
I'M GOING IN.


HEY! LOOK!
THEY'RE HEADED FOR THE CELESTIAL.
YO! YOU THREE ARE MEANT TO BE MAKING A UNI-MIND AND FIXING THIS...CAN'T YOU JUST GET ON WITH IT...?
HE'S GOING TO HARM THE CELESTIAL.
WE HAVE TO STOP HIM.

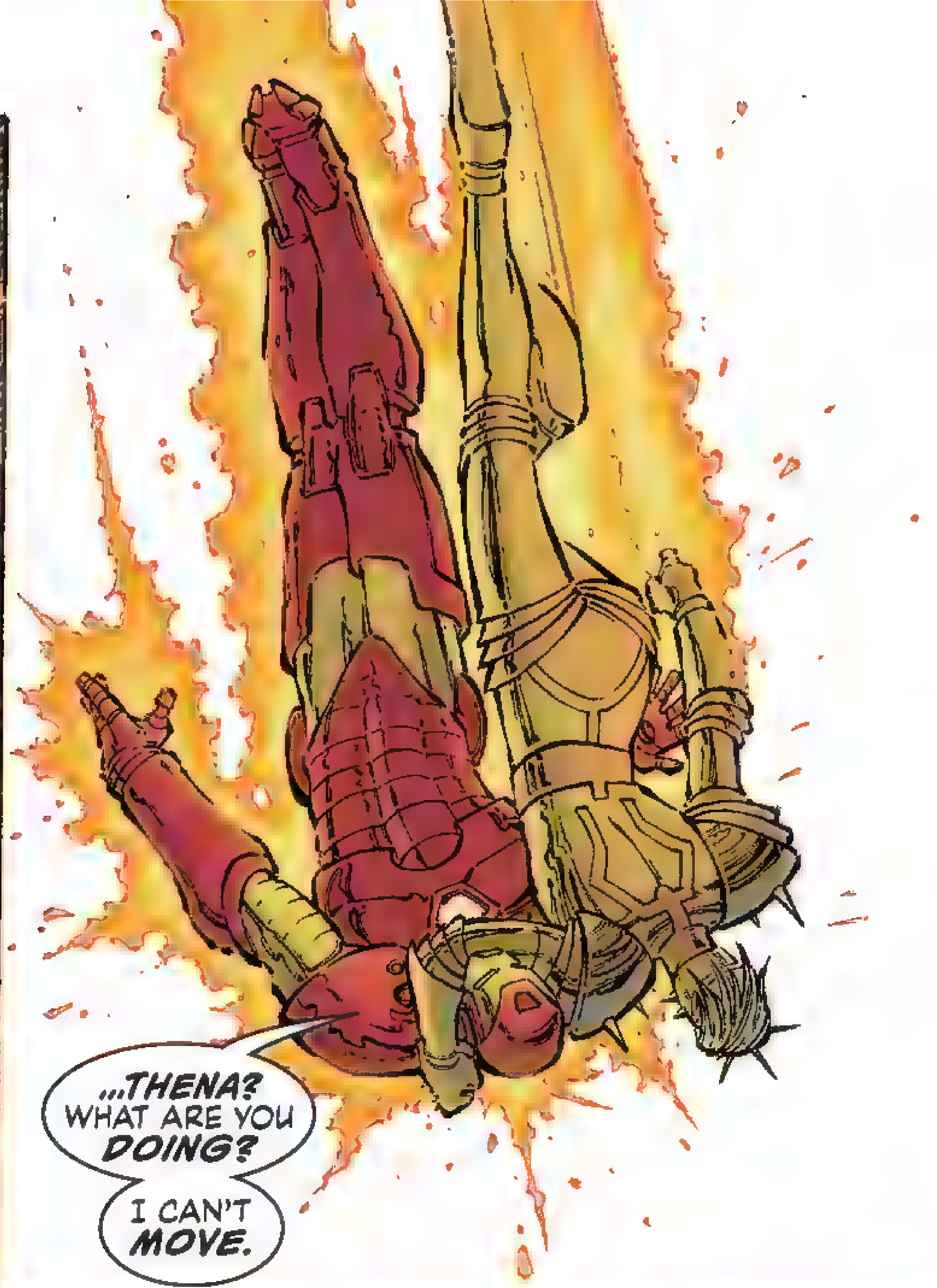

BUT YOU'RE TRYING TO HARM THE... OH, WHAT'S THE USE? I KNOW. YOU'RE HARDWIRED THAT WAY...
JUST DO IT FAST. THE SUN'S COMING UP.

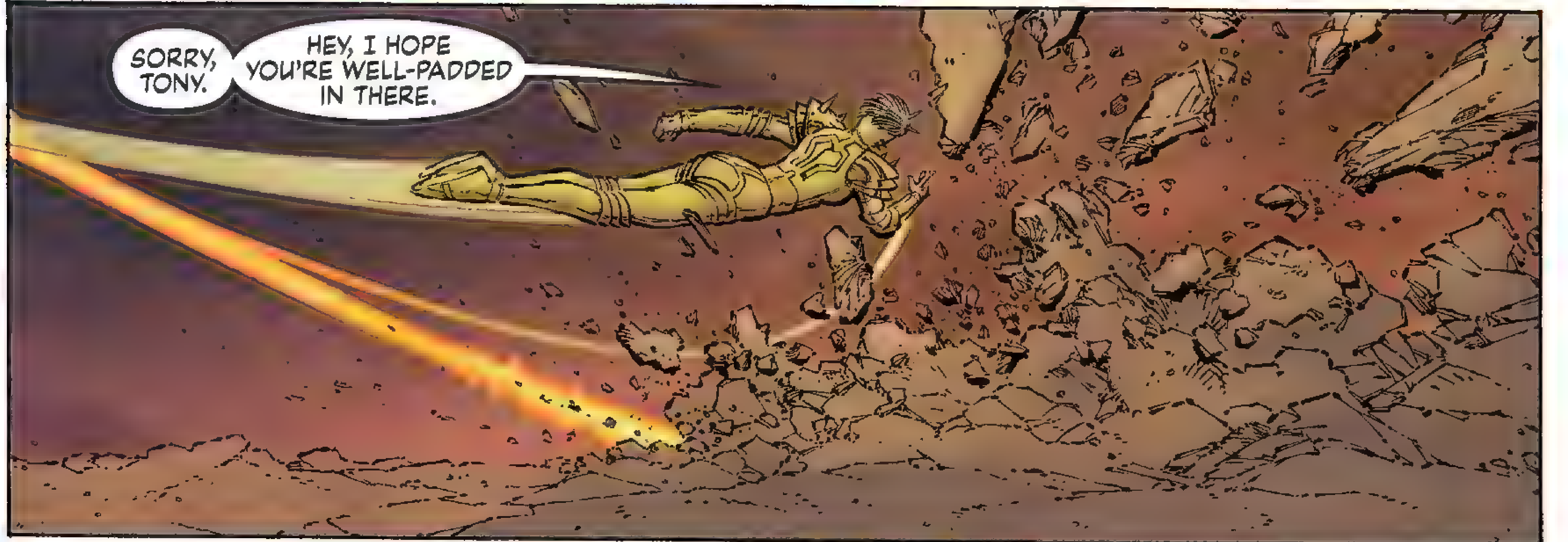


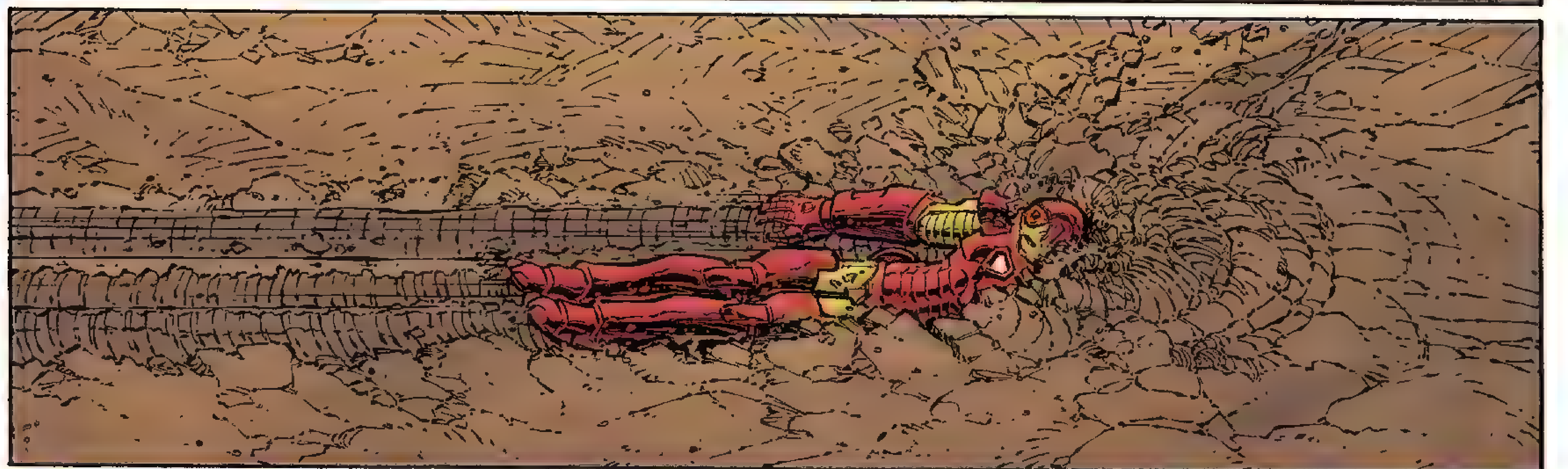
HELLO, TONY. I'M AFRAID YOU CAN'T APPROACH THE CELES-TIAL.
THENA? IS THAT YOU?
THIS THING COULD BE DANGEROUS...

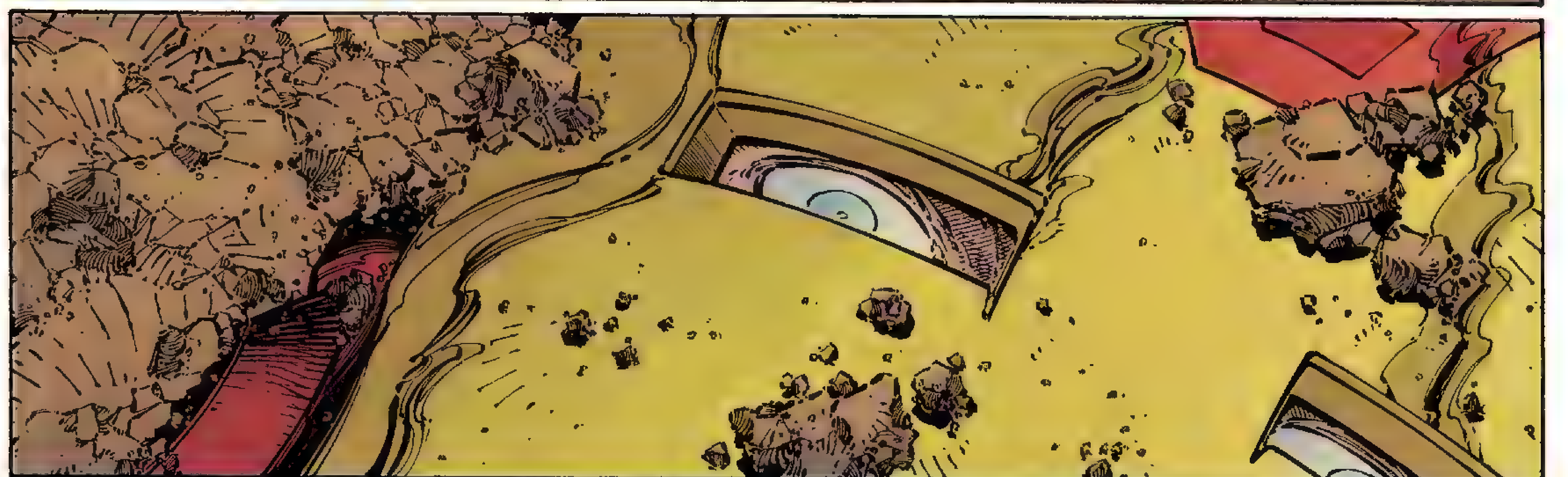



THAT WASN'T ALL YOU DID, TONY. BUT I WAS SOMEONE ELSE BACK THEN.


...THENA? WHAT ARE YOU DOING?
I CAN'T MOVE.


SORRY, TONY.
HEY, I HOPE YOU'RE WELL-PADDED IN THERE.





GOOD MORNING, DOCTOR PYM. I'M AFRAID THAT IF YOU APPROACH THE CELESTIAL, I'LL BE FORCED TO *FIGHT* YOU.

ARE YOU *THREATENING* ME?

MY NAME IS *IKARIS.* NO, IT'S NOT A THREAT.

I'M JUST DESIGNED TO PROTECT CELESTIALS. EVEN *THAT* ONE.

TRUST ME. WE *NEITHER* OF US WANT TO SEE IT COME TO LIFE.

SO CAN I ASK YOU TO *JUST STAND OVER THERE?*

THAT SOUNDS LIKE ANOTHER *THREAT.*

WASN'T *MEANT* TO. BUT IF YOU *STAND THERE* YOU MAY BUY US ANOTHER TWENTY MINUTES OR SO.

IT'S USING SUNLIGHT TO RECHARGE, AND YOUR SHADOW COULD BLOCK SOME SUN.

THE *ROBOT* RUNS ON SOLAR ENERGY?

EXACTLY. EXCEPT IT *ISN'T* A ROBOT AND IT *DOESN'T* RUN ON SOLAR ENERGY.

MY PARTNER, JAN. THE WASP. SHE'S TALKING *NONSENSE...*

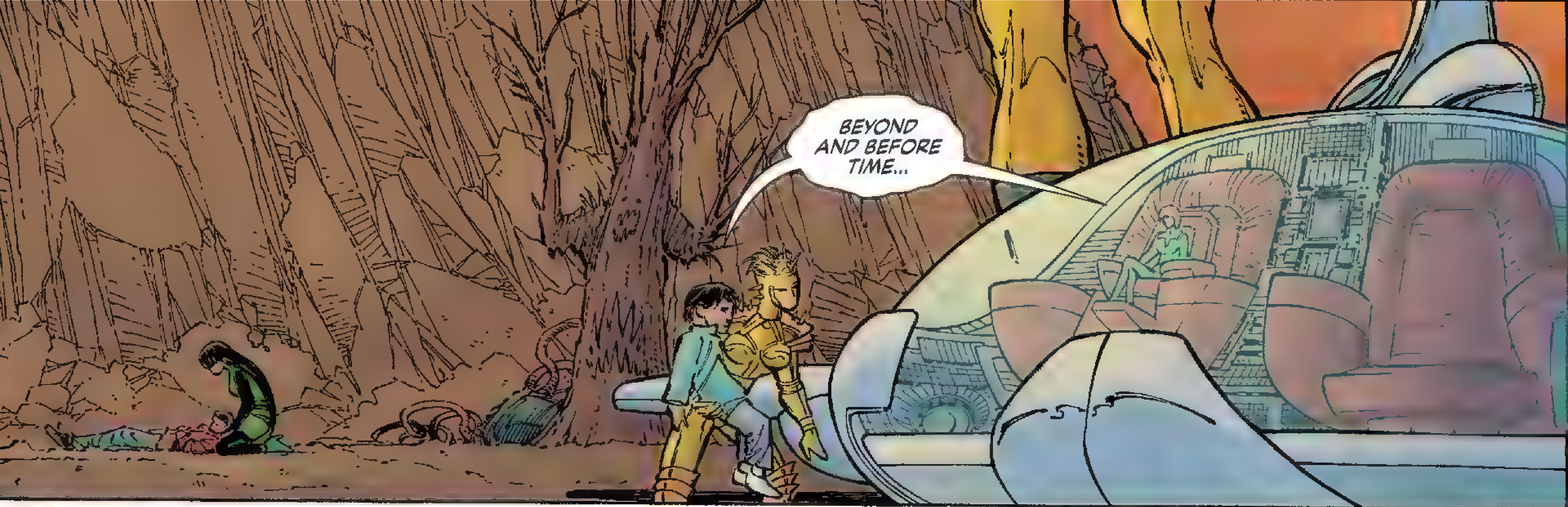
THE CELESTIAL'S *BROADCASTING,* I'M AFRAID--SOME HUMAN MINDS CAN RESONATE ON ITS FREQUENCIES. IT'S A SPILLOVER EFFECT.

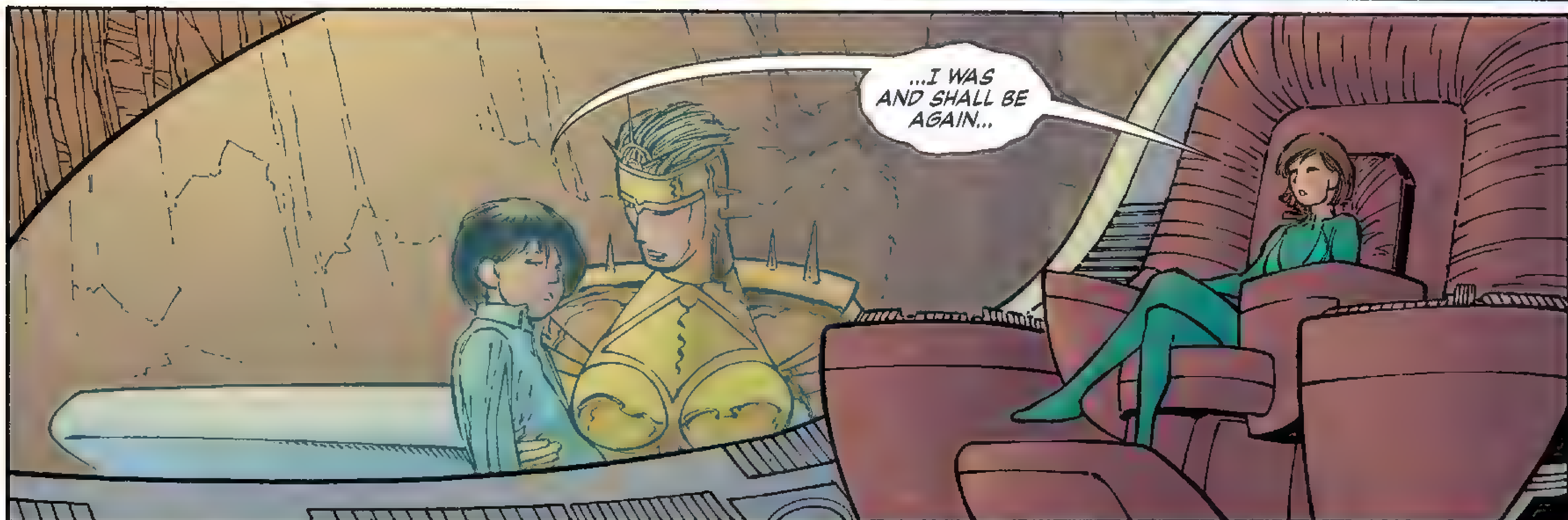
IF IT WAKES, IT MAY DESTROY ANY MINDS IT'S LINKED TO. HUMAN MINDS WEREN'T BUILT TO COMMUNICATE TO CELESTIALS. NEITHER WERE ETERNAL MINDS, FOR THAT MATTER.

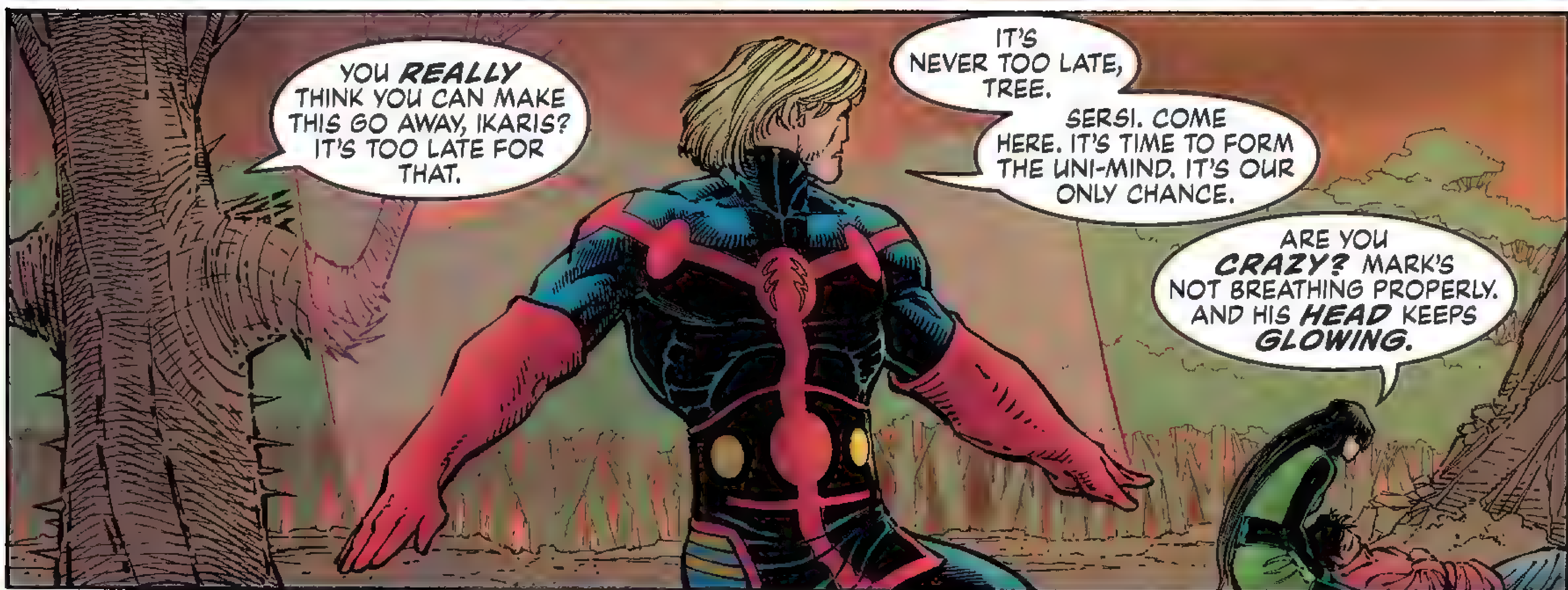
SO WOULD YOU MIND *JUST STAYING THERE QUIETLY AND NOT FIGHTING ME?*

WELL, I GUESS, IF YOU PUT IT LIKE THAT...

...SURE.


BEYOND AND BEFORE TIME...


...I WAS AND SHALL BE AGAIN...

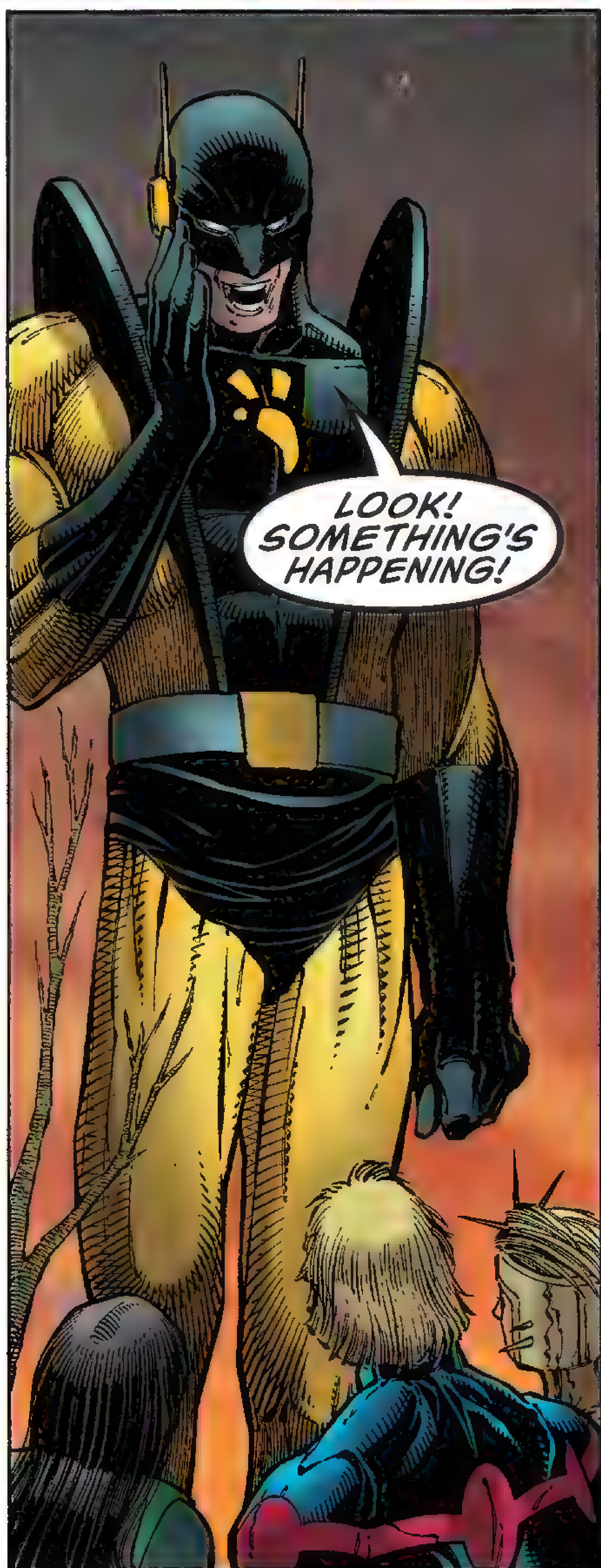

YOU REALLY THINK YOU CAN MAKE THIS GO AWAY, IKARIS? IT'S TOO LATE FOR THAT.
IT'S NEVER TOO LATE, TREE.
SERSI. COME HERE. IT'S TIME TO FORM THE UNI-MIND. IT'S OUR ONLY CHANCE.
ARE YOU CRAZY? MARK'S NOT BREATHING PROPERLY. AND HIS HEAD KEEPS GLOWING.

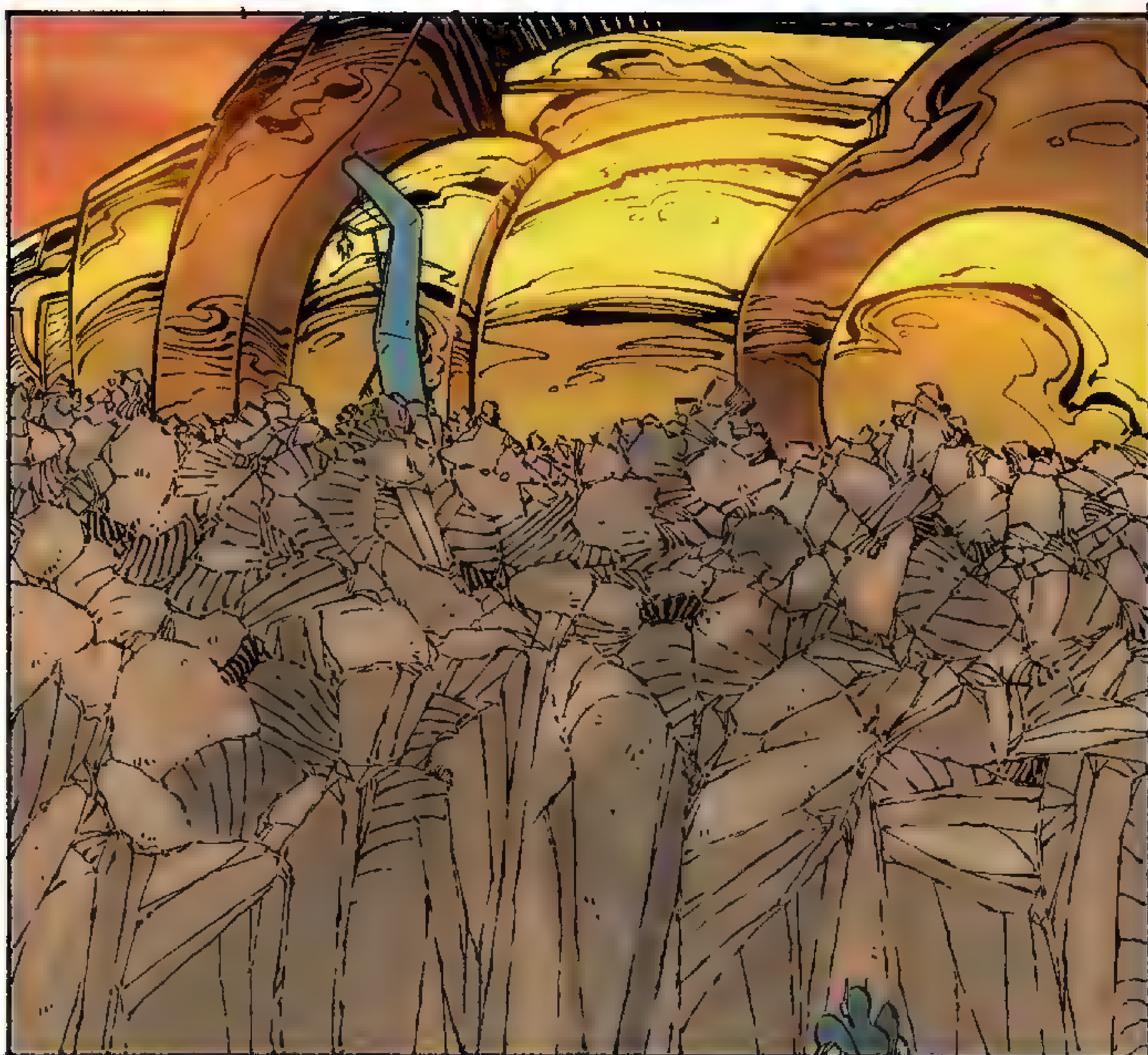

THEY USED HIM TO OPEN THE CELESTIAL'S PRISON. IT'S JUST A TEMPORARY THING. HE'LL BE FINE IN A COUPLE OF YEARS.
A COUPLE OF YEARS?
LIKE I SAID. IT'LL WEAR OFF QUICKLY. THENA, ARE YOU READY?

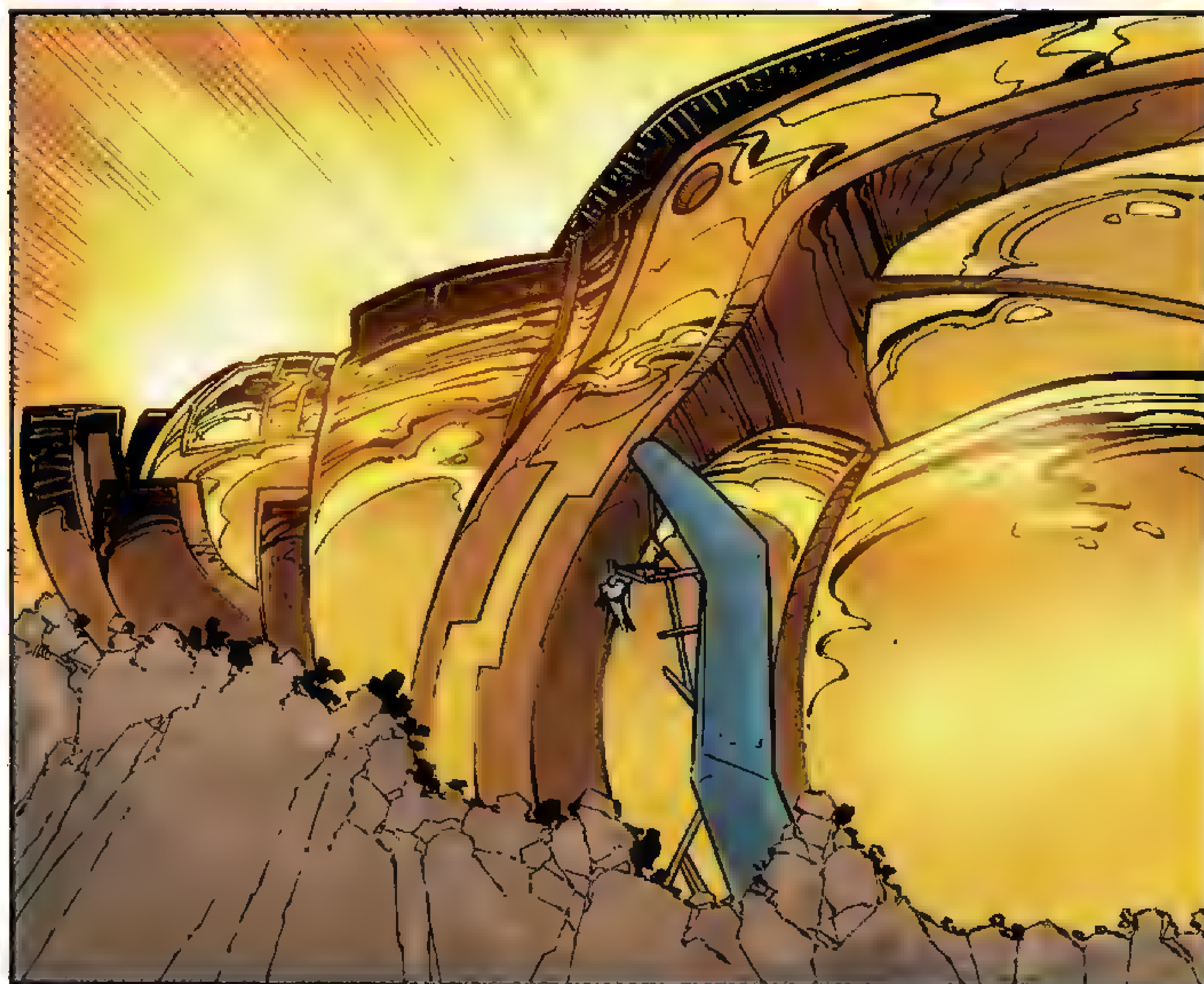

READY.
I DON'T THINK I WANT TO BE PART OF THIS. YOU GUYS JUST CARRY ON WITHOUT ME.
I DON'T REMEMBER THE STUFF YOU DO. I DON'T KNOW HOW TO FLY. I'M NOT EVEN SURE I LIKE CHANGING THINGS INTO THINGS.

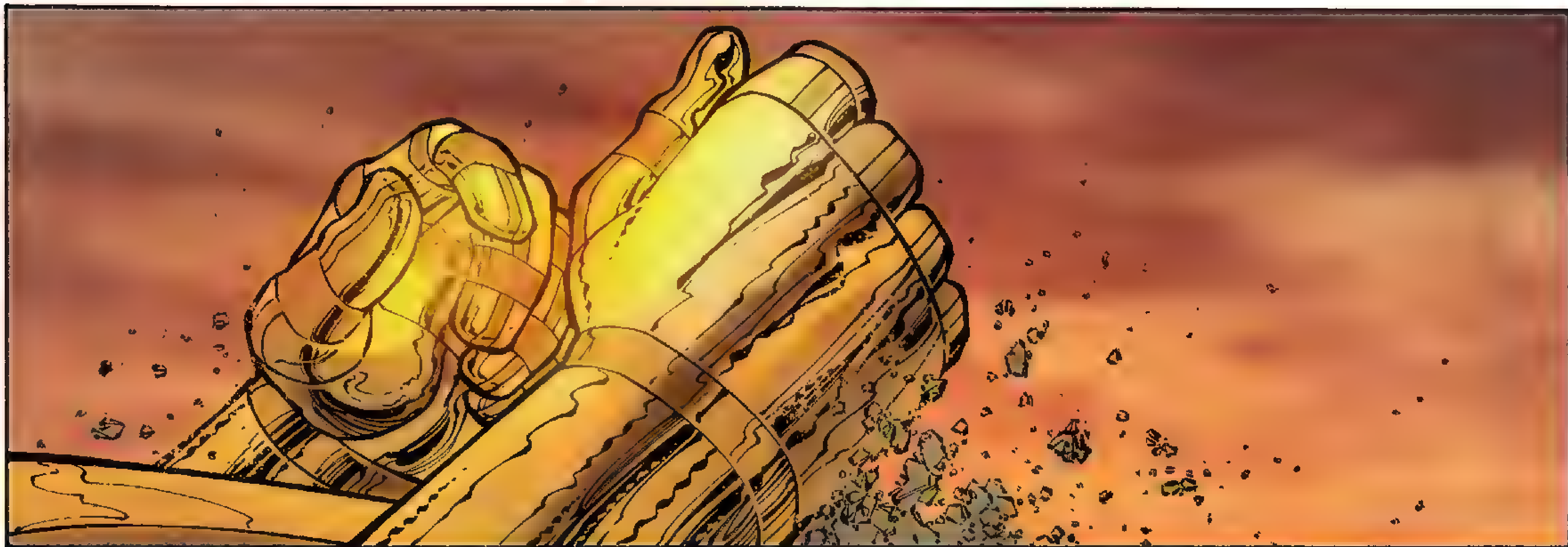

SUN'S COMING UP, IKARIS. GO DO WHATEVER YOU HAVE TO DO. I'M GOING TO TRY AND WAKE UP MARK.
WAKE MARK UP AND YOU COULD DESTROY HIM, SERSI.
ACCORDING TO YOU, WHEN BIG BLACK-AND-GOLD AWAKES, WE ALL DIE ANYWAY. GO PLAY ON YOUR OWN. I'M DONE.

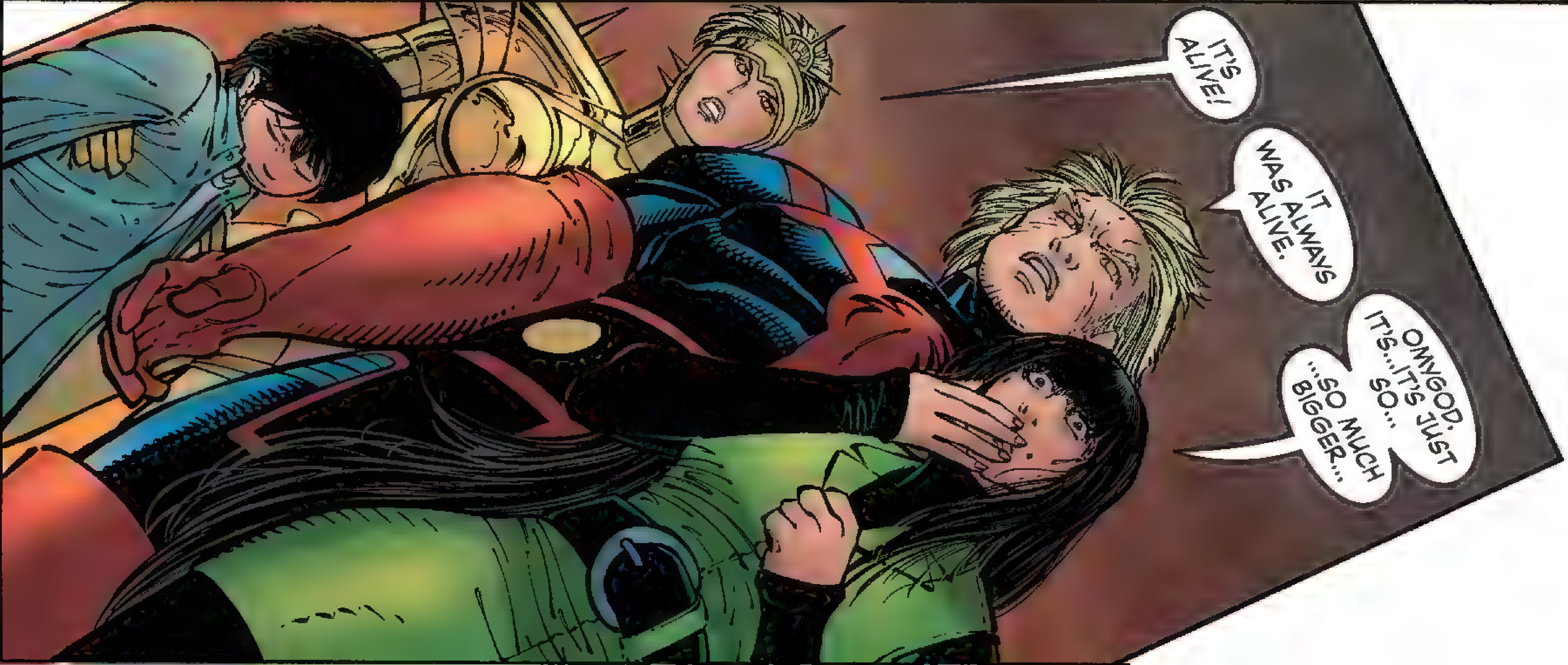

SHE'S JUST A GIRL. YOU DON'T HAVE TO TAKE THAT.
HEY, EXCUSE ME. HEY...


LOOK! SOMETHING'S HAPPENING!




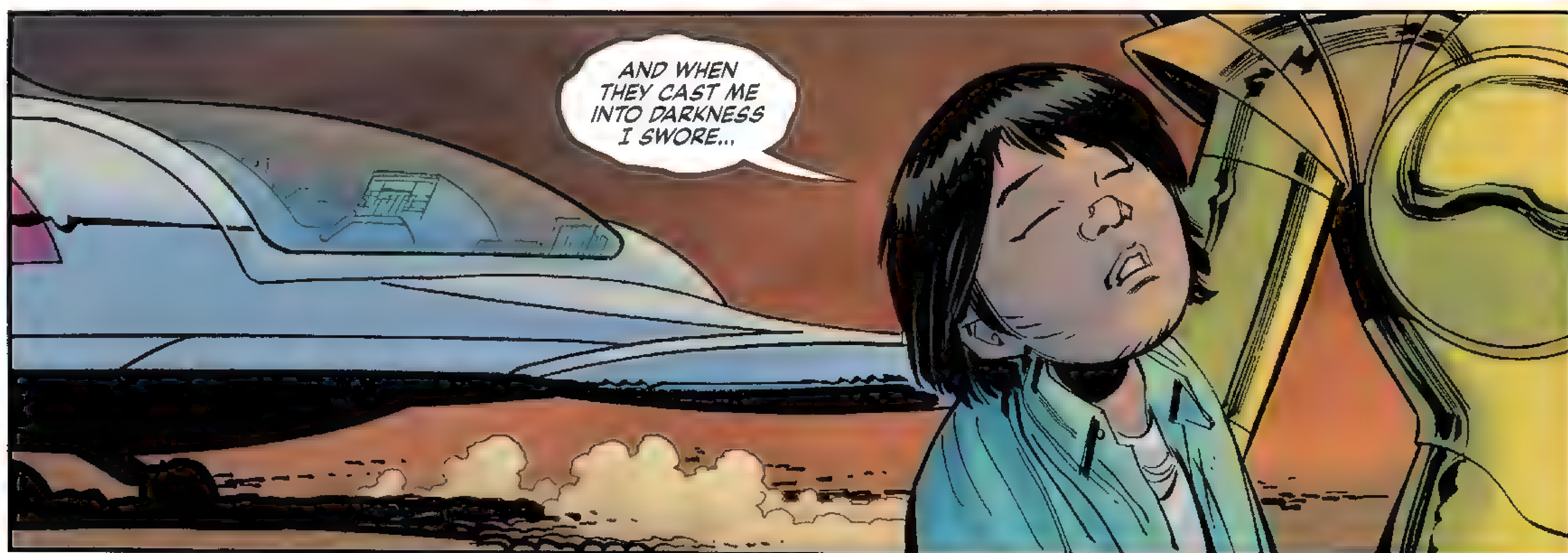




IT'S ALIVE!
IT WAS ALWAYS ALIVE.
OMYGOD. IT'S...IT'S JUST SO...
...SO MUCH BIGGER...


...BIGGER THAN I EVER IMAGINED.
OKAY. THAT'S BIG, ALL RIGHT.

IS IT AWAKE NOW?
NOT ENTIRELY. ITS OUTER CASE IS POWERING UP, BUT THE CELESTIAL INSIDE IS NOT YET FULLY CONSCIOUS.
HOW DO YOU KNOW?
WE'RE STILL **HERE,** AREN'T WE?

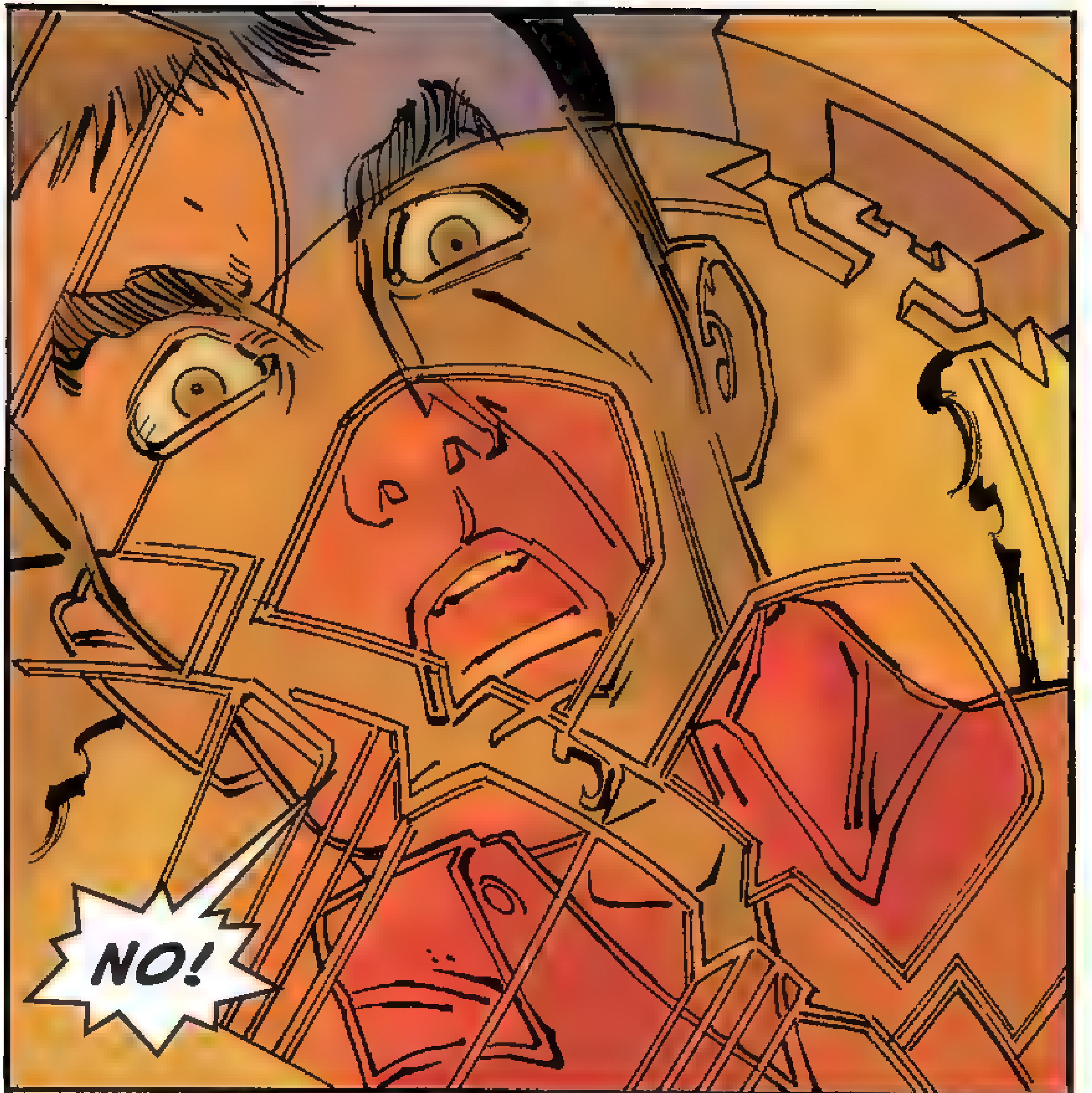


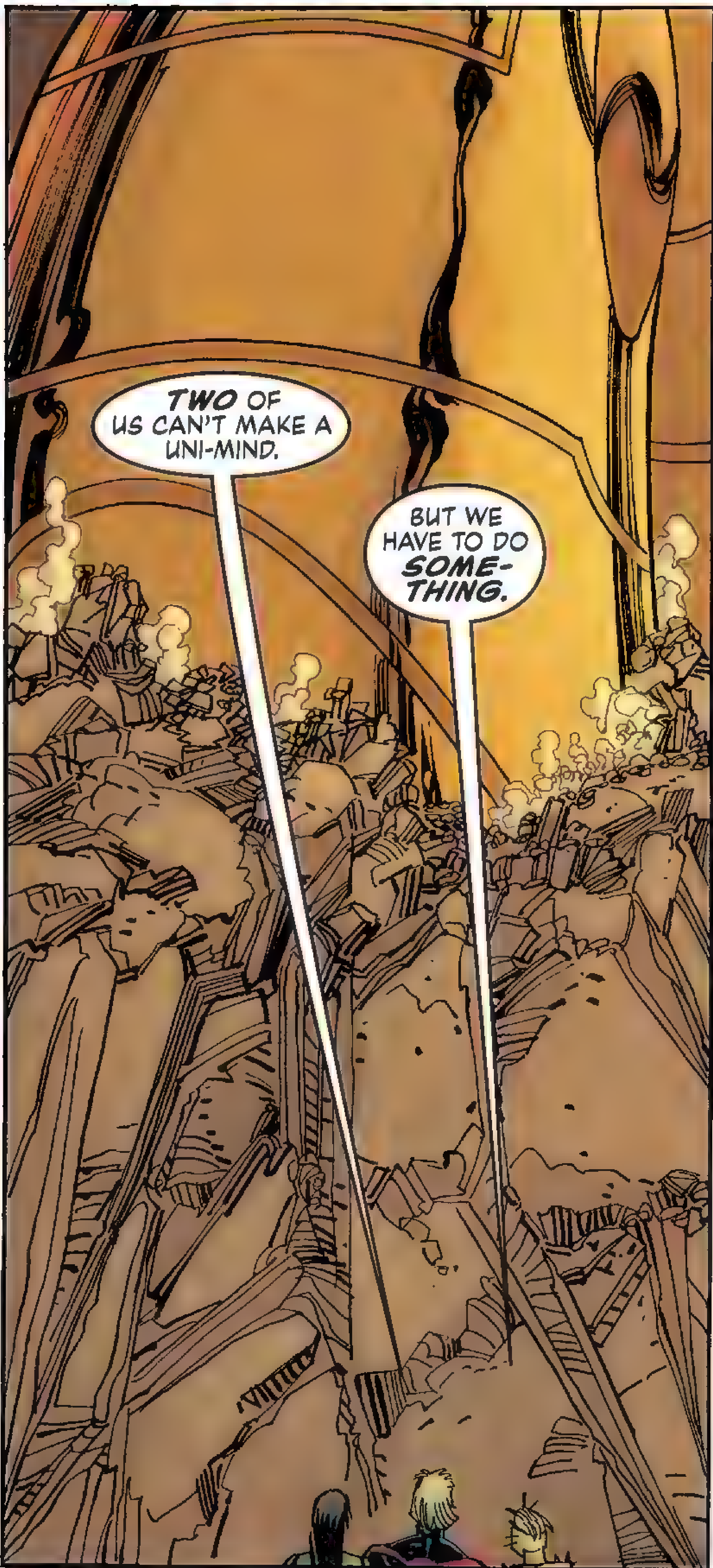






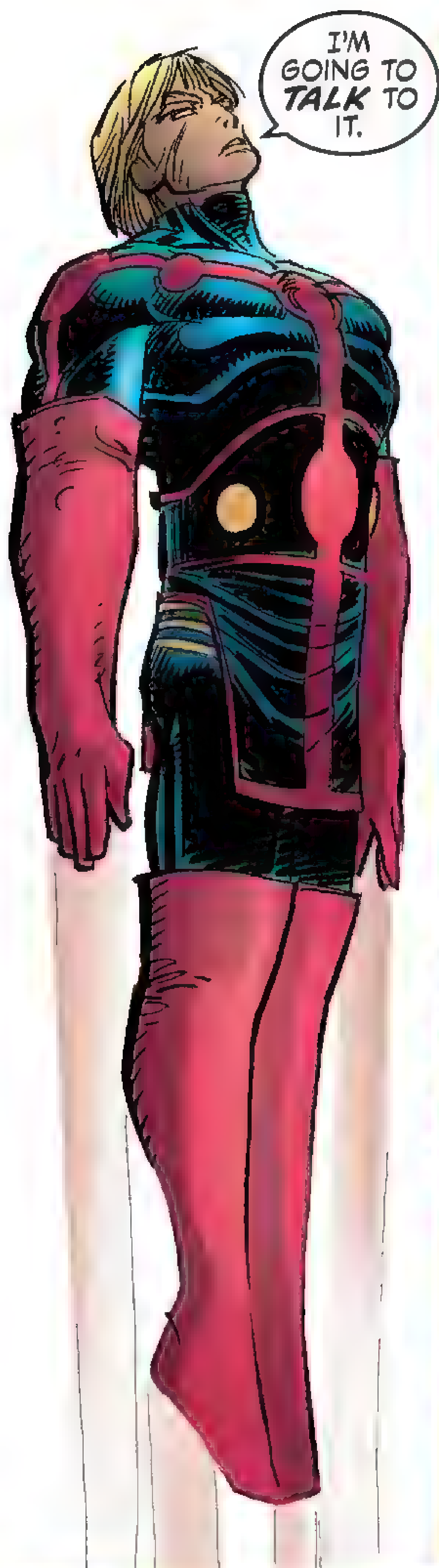

"AND FOUR HUNDRED THOUSAND YEARS ON FROM THAT, THE EARTH SHOOK, AND, DISTURBED, I SWORE THAT WHOEVER FREED ME WOULD PERISH FIRST, AND THAT WOULD BE MY ONLY GIFT."


NO!

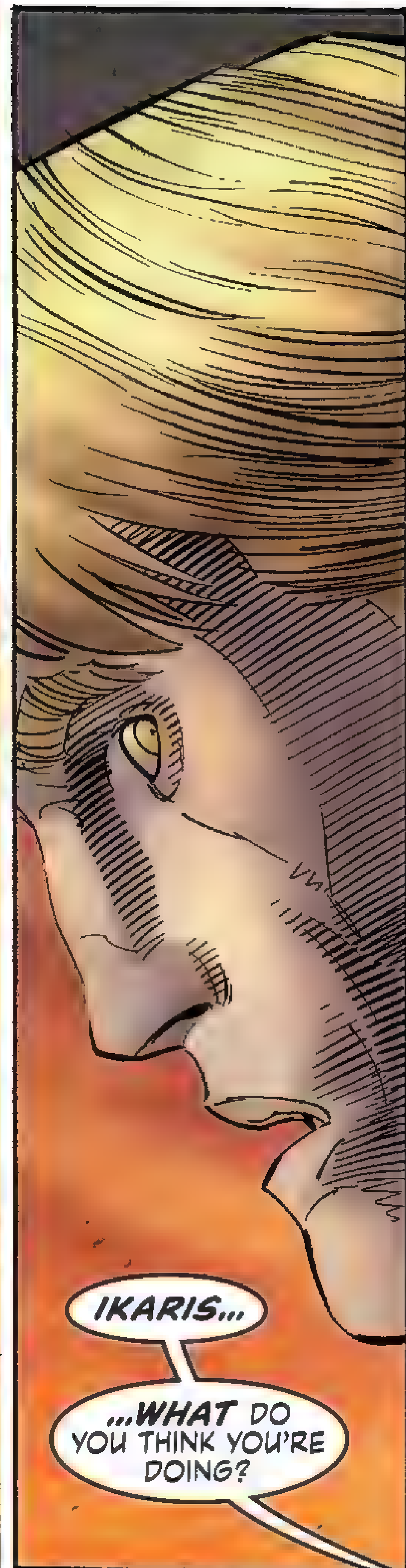

TWO OF US CAN'T MAKE A UNI-MIND.
BUT WE HAVE TO DO SOME-THING.

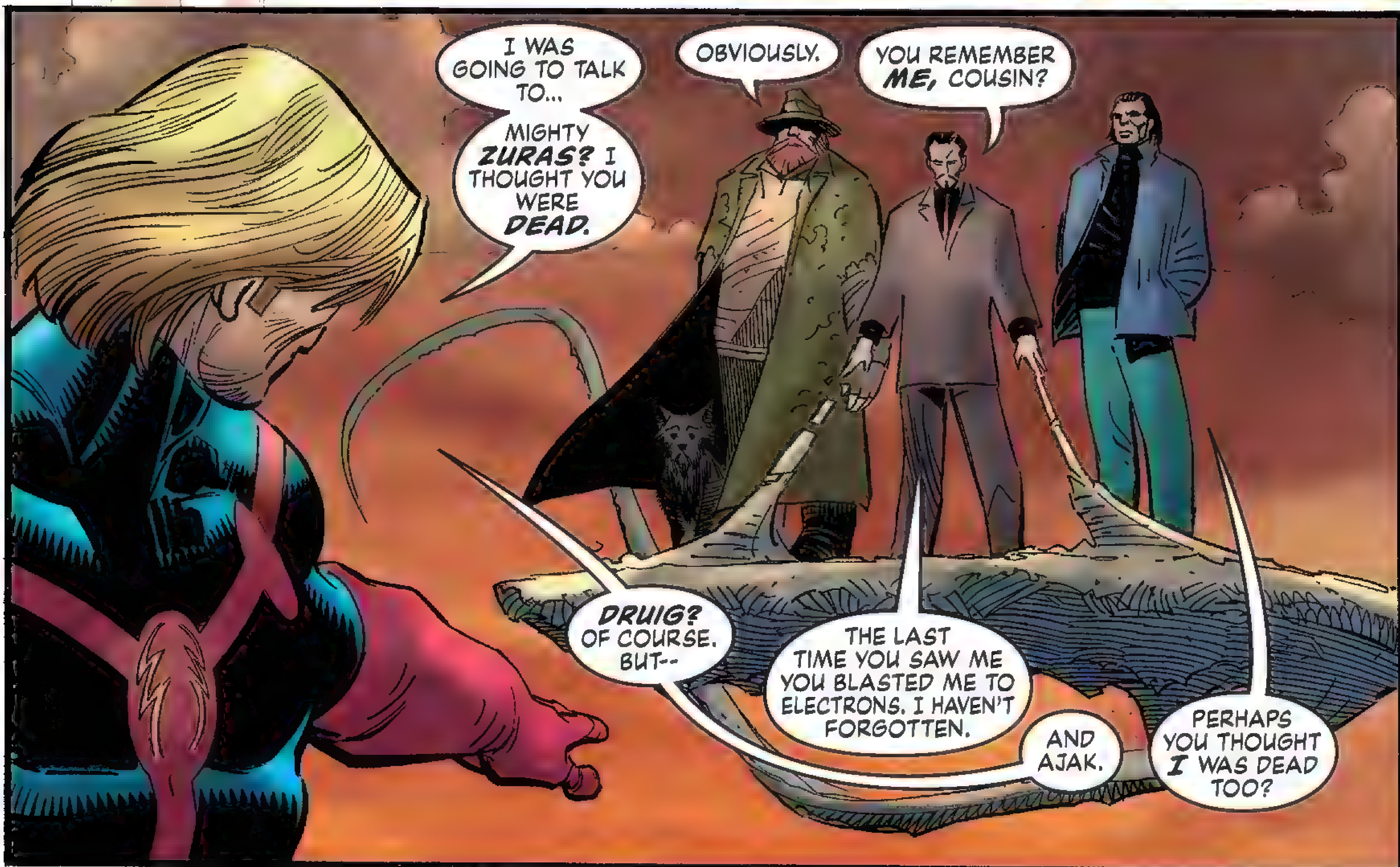

YOU AREN'T FULLY ETERNAL YET, THENA. I AM.
I'M GOING TO DEAL WITH IT.


IF YOU ATTACK A CELESTIAL, YOU'LL JUST SHUT DOWN, LIKE MAKKARI.
THEN I WON'T ATTACK IT.


I'M GOING TO TALK TO IT.

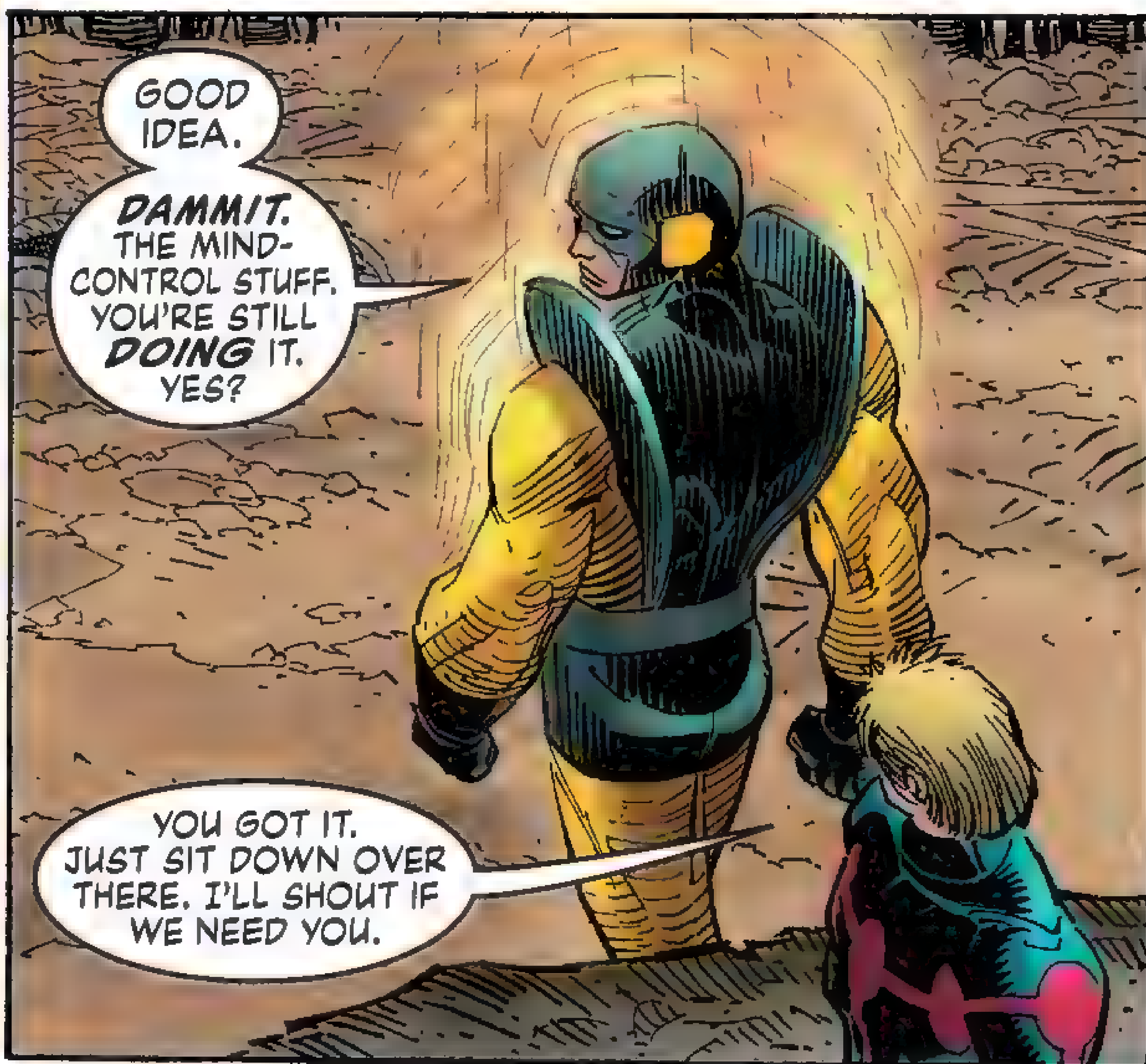

UH... RIGHT...OKAY. UM...
GREAT CELESTIAL... UM...


IKARIS...
...WHAT DO YOU THINK YOU'RE DOING?

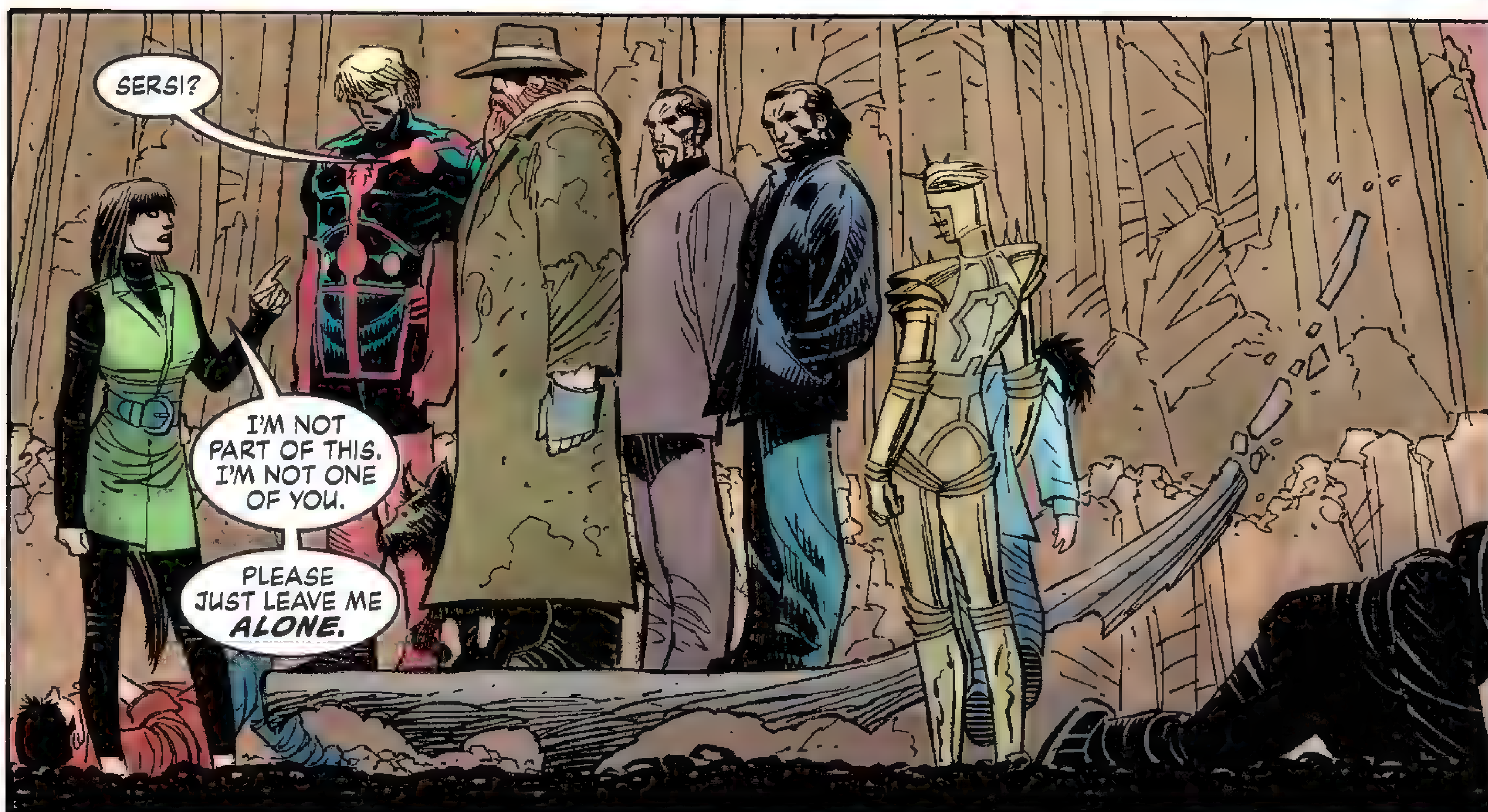

I WAS GOING TO TALK TO...
OBVIOUSLY.
YOU REMEMBER ME, COUSIN?
MIGHTY ZURAS? I THOUGHT YOU WERE DEAD.
DRUIG? OF COURSE. BUT--
THE LAST TIME YOU SAW ME YOU BLASTED ME TO ELECTRONS. I HAVEN'T FORGOTTEN.
AND AJAK.
PERHAPS YOU THOUGHT I WAS DEAD TOO?

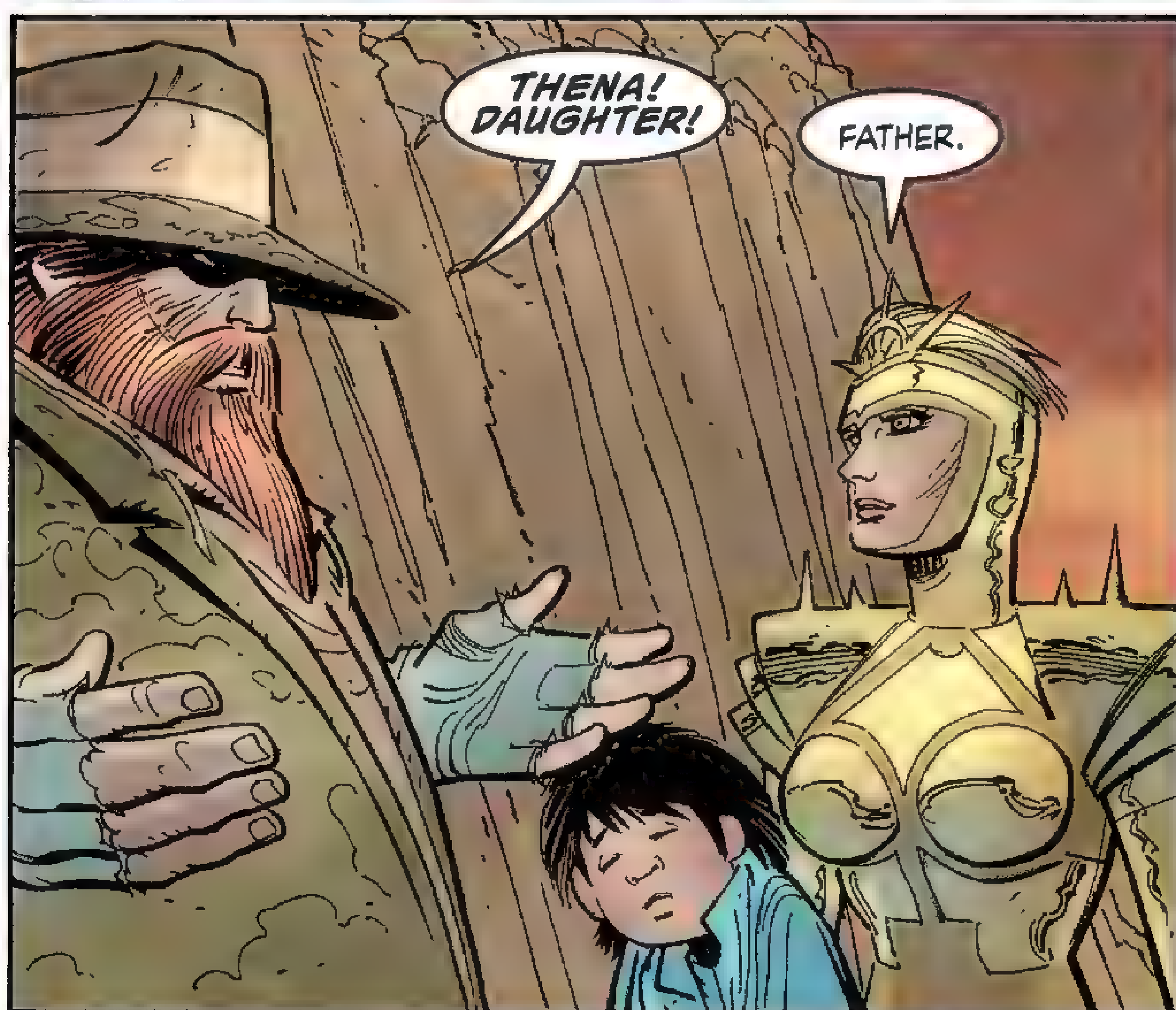

MY LORD. MY FRIEND. MY ENEMY.
YOU WERE GOING TO TRY TO TALK TO THE CELESTIAL, IKARIS?
I HAD NO OTHER CHOICE, SIRE.


EXCUSE ME, IKARIS. I WAS JUST WONDERING. WHEN YOU TALKED ME INTO STANDING HERE, AND NOT DOING ANYTHING. THAT WAS SOME KIND OF ETERNAL MIND-CONTROL TRICK, WASN'T IT?
YOU GOT IT, BIG GUY. I'M IMPRESSED YOU FIGURED IT OUT. SO WHY DON'T YOU SHRINK DOWN TO NORMAL SIZE AND SIT DOWN NEXT TO IRON MAN...
...WHILE WE DECIDE WHAT WE'RE DOING HERE?

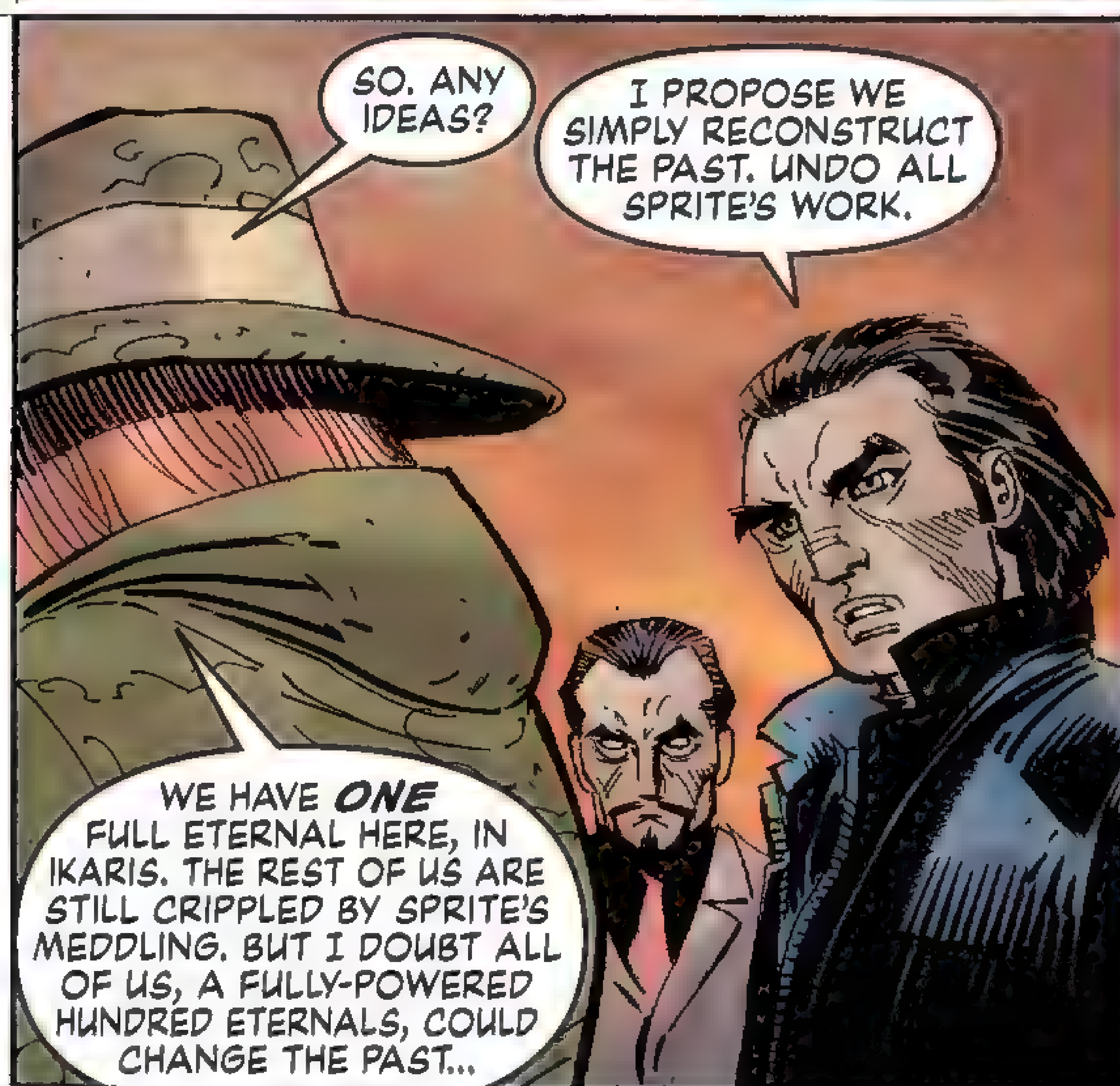

GOOD IDEA.
DAMMIT. THE MIND-CONTROL STUFF. YOU'RE STILL DOING IT. YES?
YOU GOT IT. JUST SIT DOWN OVER THERE. I'LL SHOUT IF WE NEED YOU.

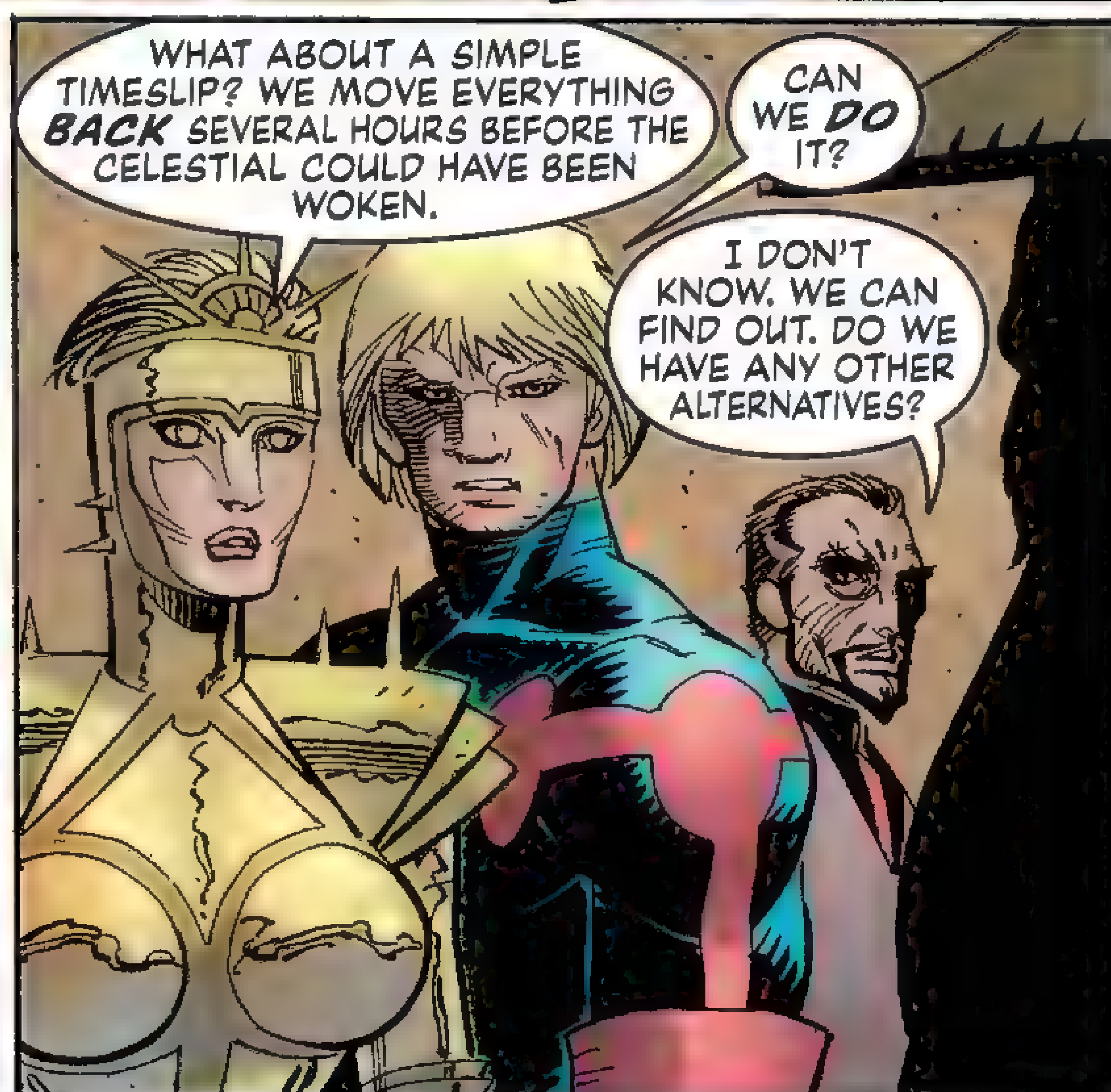

MAKKARI?
HE'S UNCONSCIOUS. I THINK HE'S IN A FUGUE STATE.


SERSI?
I'M NOT PART OF THIS. I'M NOT ONE OF YOU.
PLEASE JUST LEAVE ME ALONE.


THENA! DAUGHTER!
FATHER.


YOU HAVE A HUMAN CHILD, THENA.
YOU HAVE A DOG, FATHER. AND YOU NEED TO BE WASHED.


SO. ANY IDEAS?
I PROPOSE WE SIMPLY RECONSTRUCT THE PAST. UNDO ALL SPRITE'S WORK.
WE HAVE ONE FULL ETERNAL HERE, IN IKARIS. THE REST OF US ARE STILL CRIPPLED BY SPRITE'S MEDDLING. BUT I DOUBT ALL OF US, A FULLY-POWERED HUNDRED ETERNALS, COULD CHANGE THE PAST...

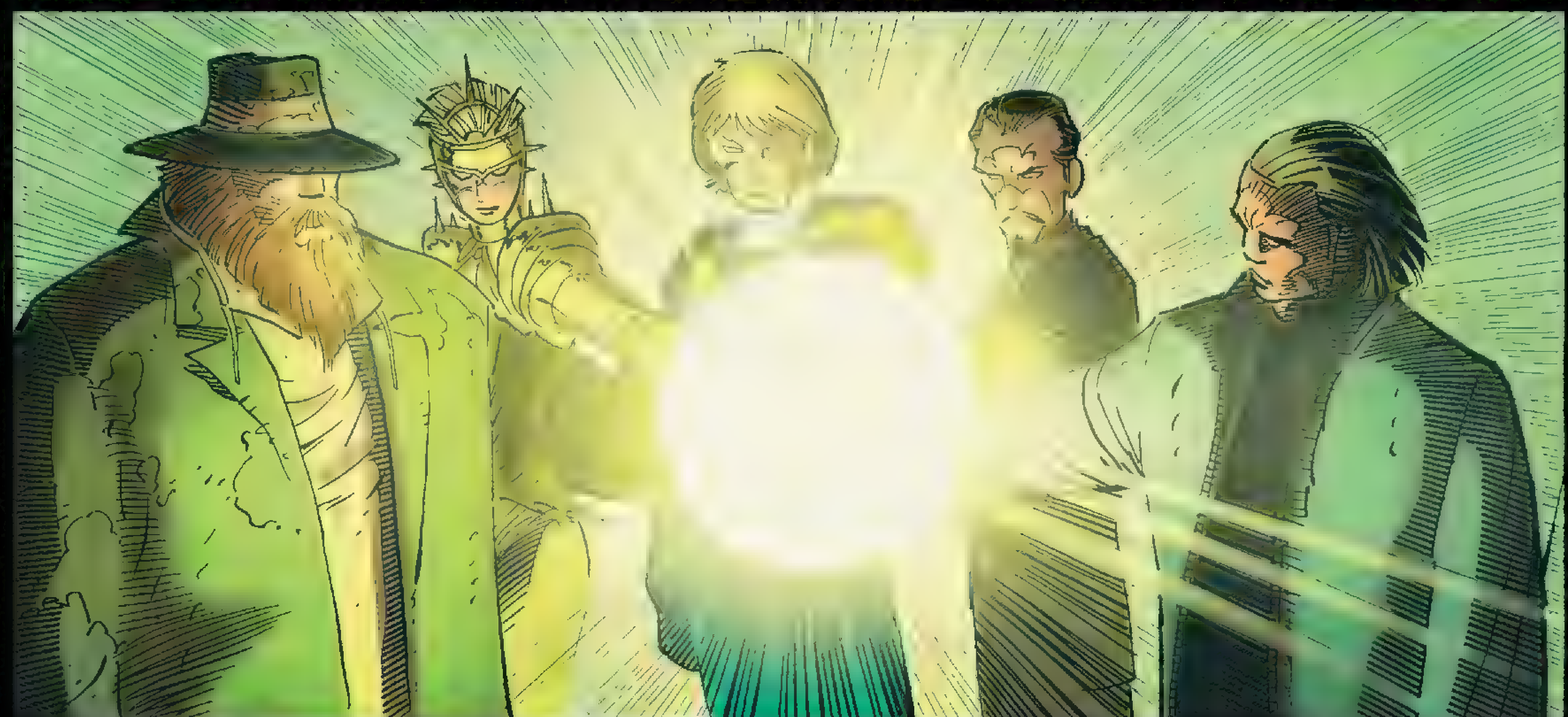

WHAT ABOUT A SIMPLE TIMESLIP? WE MOVE EVERYTHING BACK SEVERAL HOURS BEFORE THE CELESTIAL COULD HAVE BEEN WOKEN.
CAN WE DO IT?
I DON'T KNOW. WE CAN FIND OUT. DO WE HAVE ANY OTHER ALTERNATIVES?


I AM SPEAKER TO CELESTIALS. I SHOULD TALK TO IT.
AND TELL IT WHAT? TO GO BACK TO SLEEP FOR *ANOTHER* MILLION YEARS?
PERHAPS...
WE COULD ALSO SEND A REQUEST FOR HELP TO THE *OTHER* CELESTIALS...


THE SLEEPING ONE WAS *OUR* RESPONSIBILITY.
WE SHALL DO WHAT WE *HAVE* TO DO.



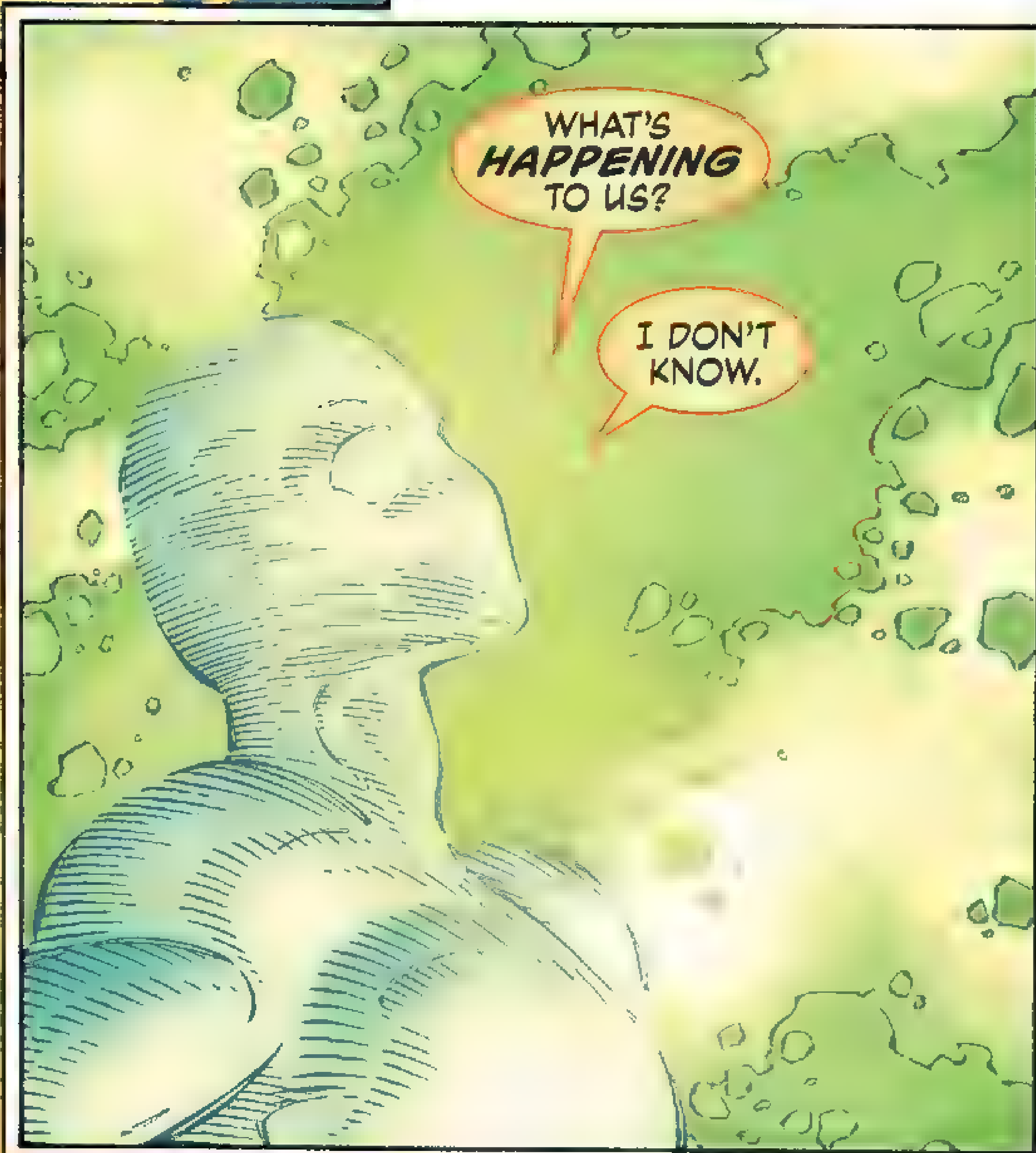


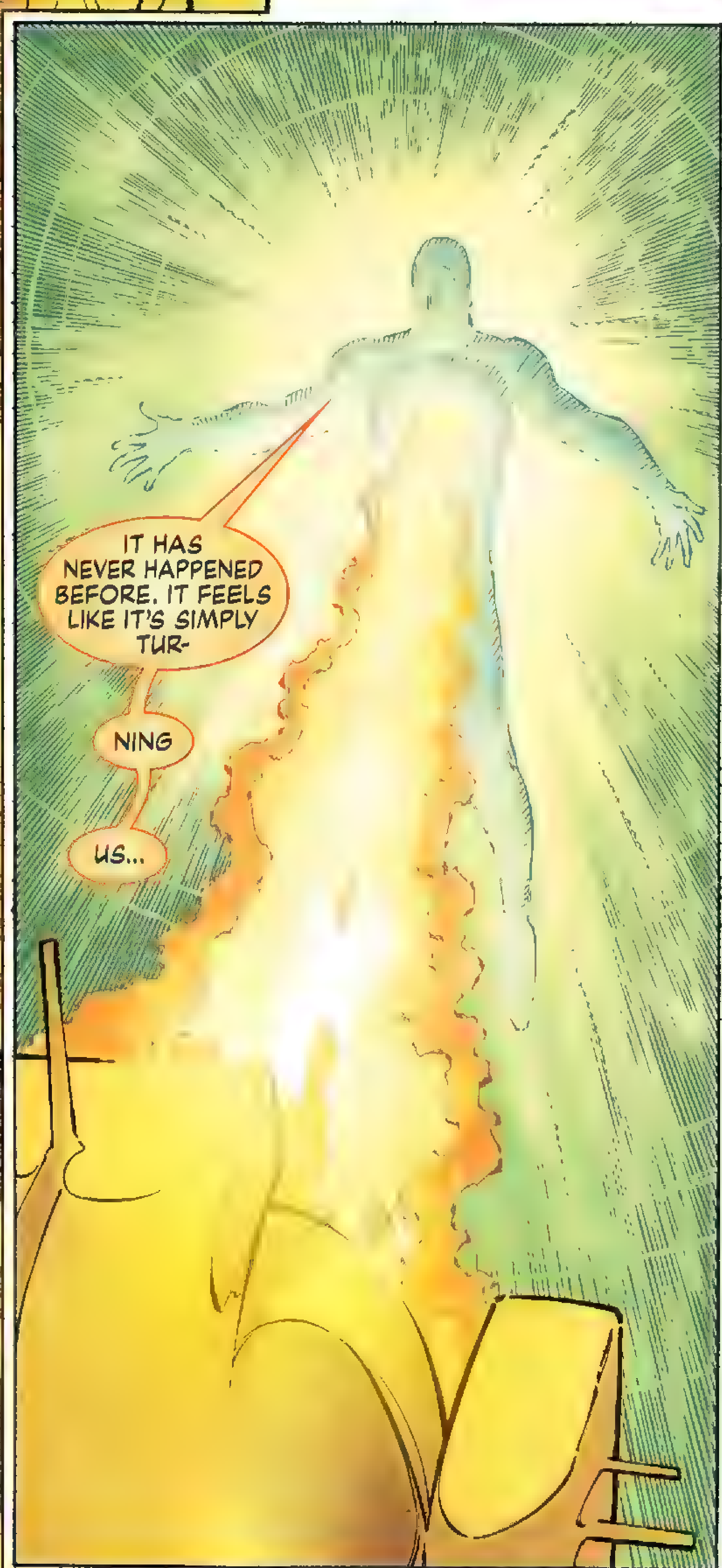


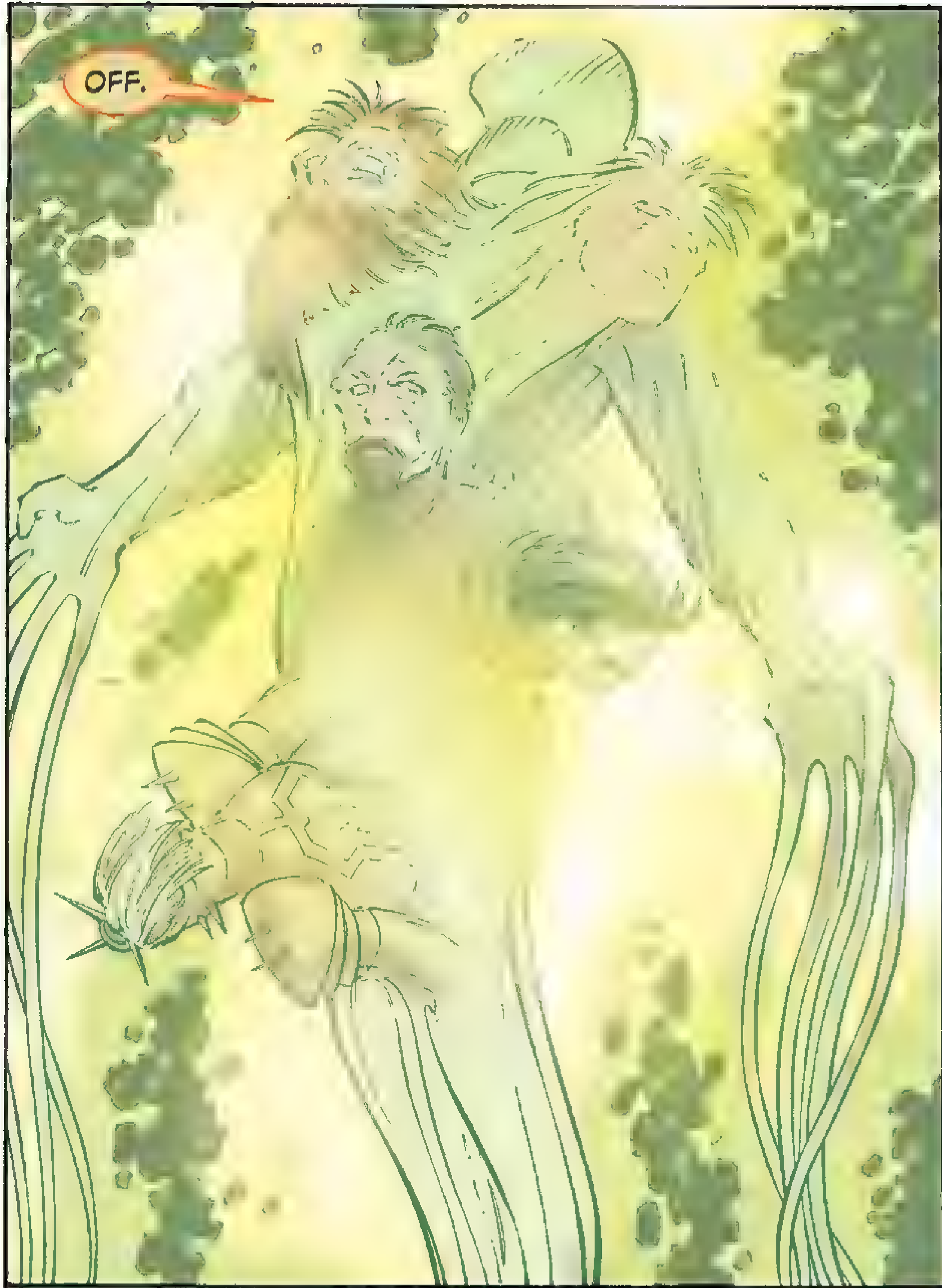
IT HAS NO GENDER. IT HAS NO RACE. IT IS MADE OF LIGHT AND MIND AND OF PURE ENERGY. IT IS COMPOSED OF WILL AND OF INTELLIGENCE.

IT IS THE ***UNI-MIND.*** THE CELESTIALS' GREATEST GIFT TO THE ETERNALS...

THERE ARE CELESTIAL ENERGIES **EVERYWHERE** HERE. ENOUGH POWER TO PUSH THE TIME-RIP AND...

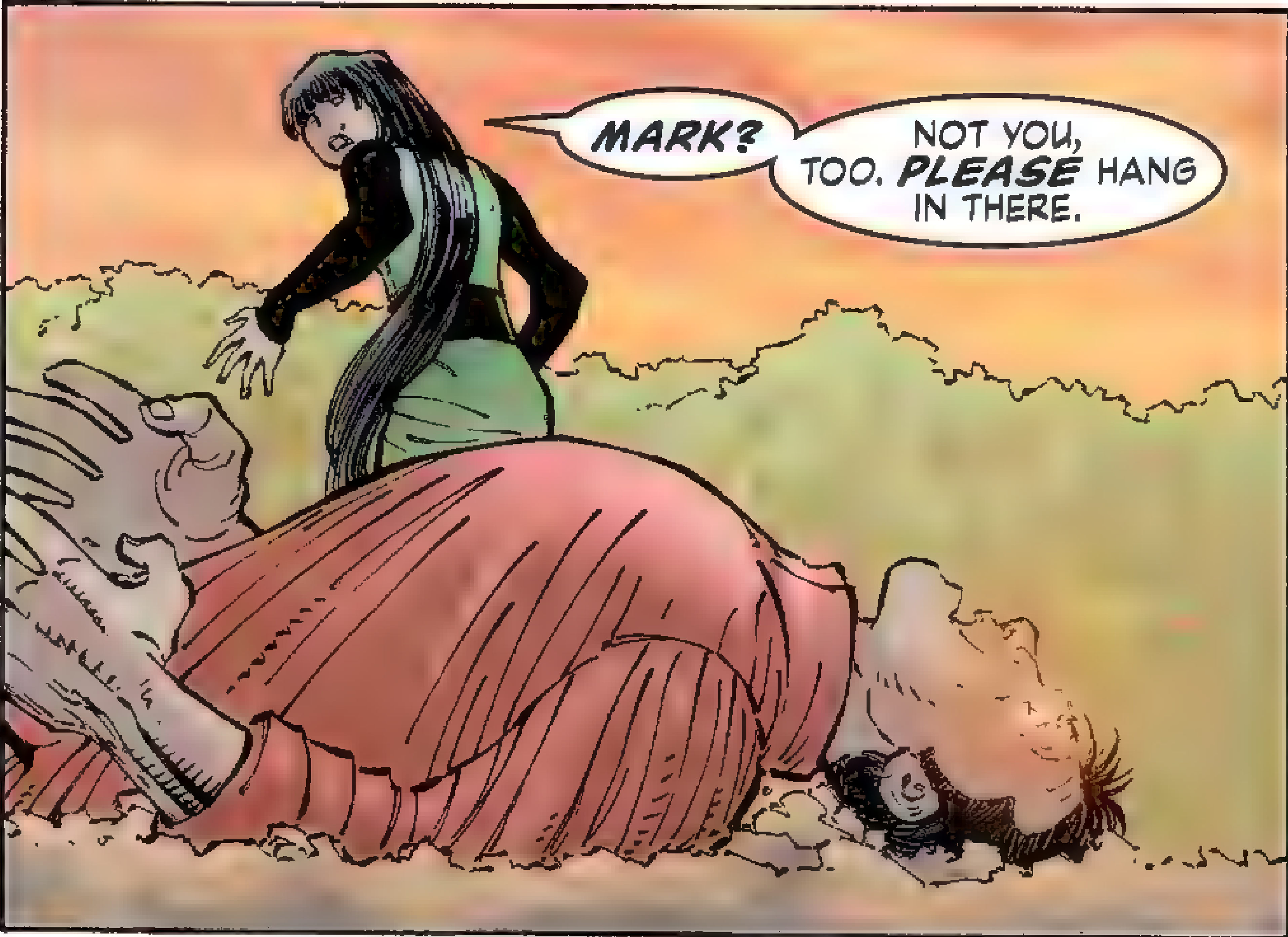


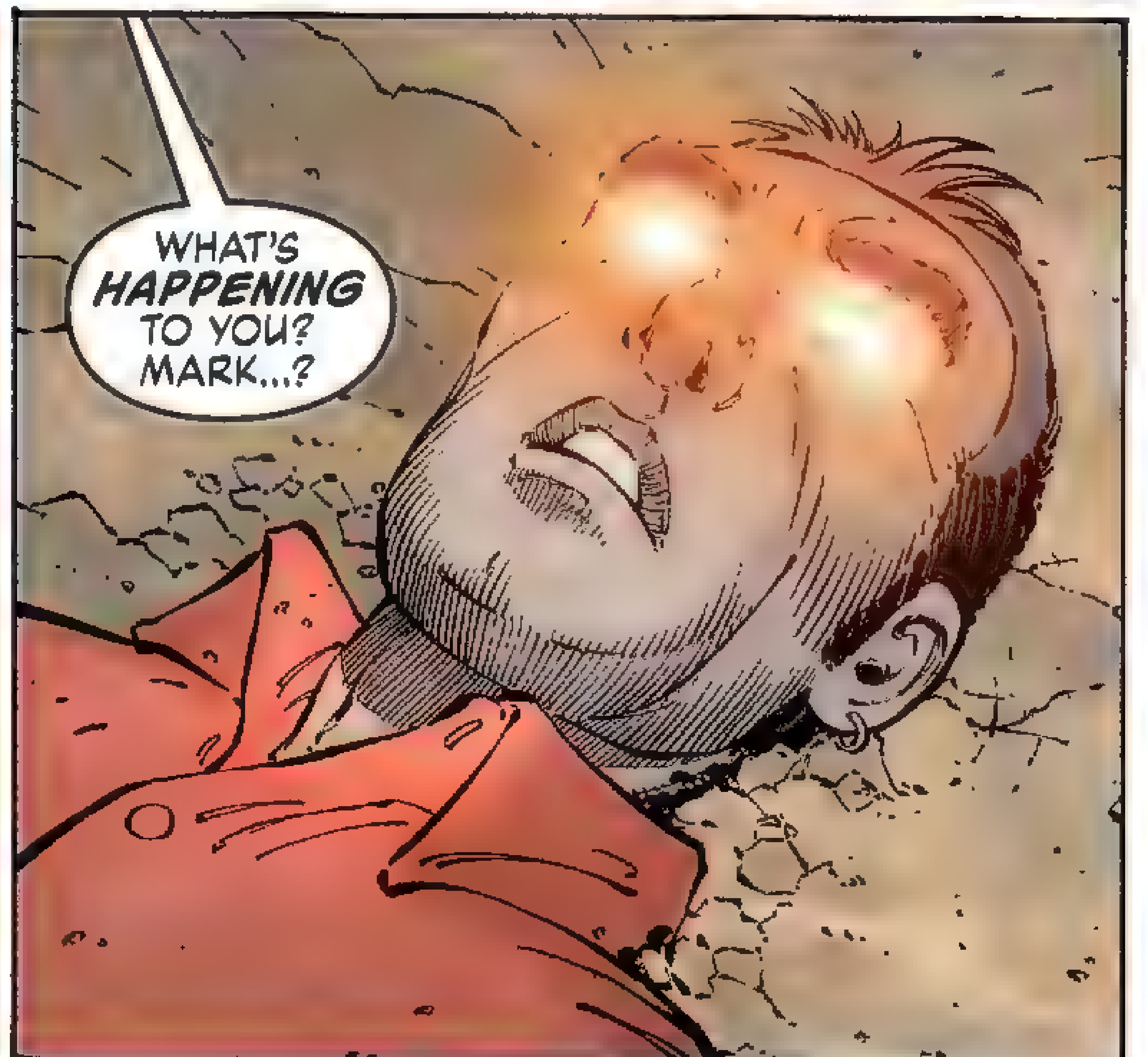


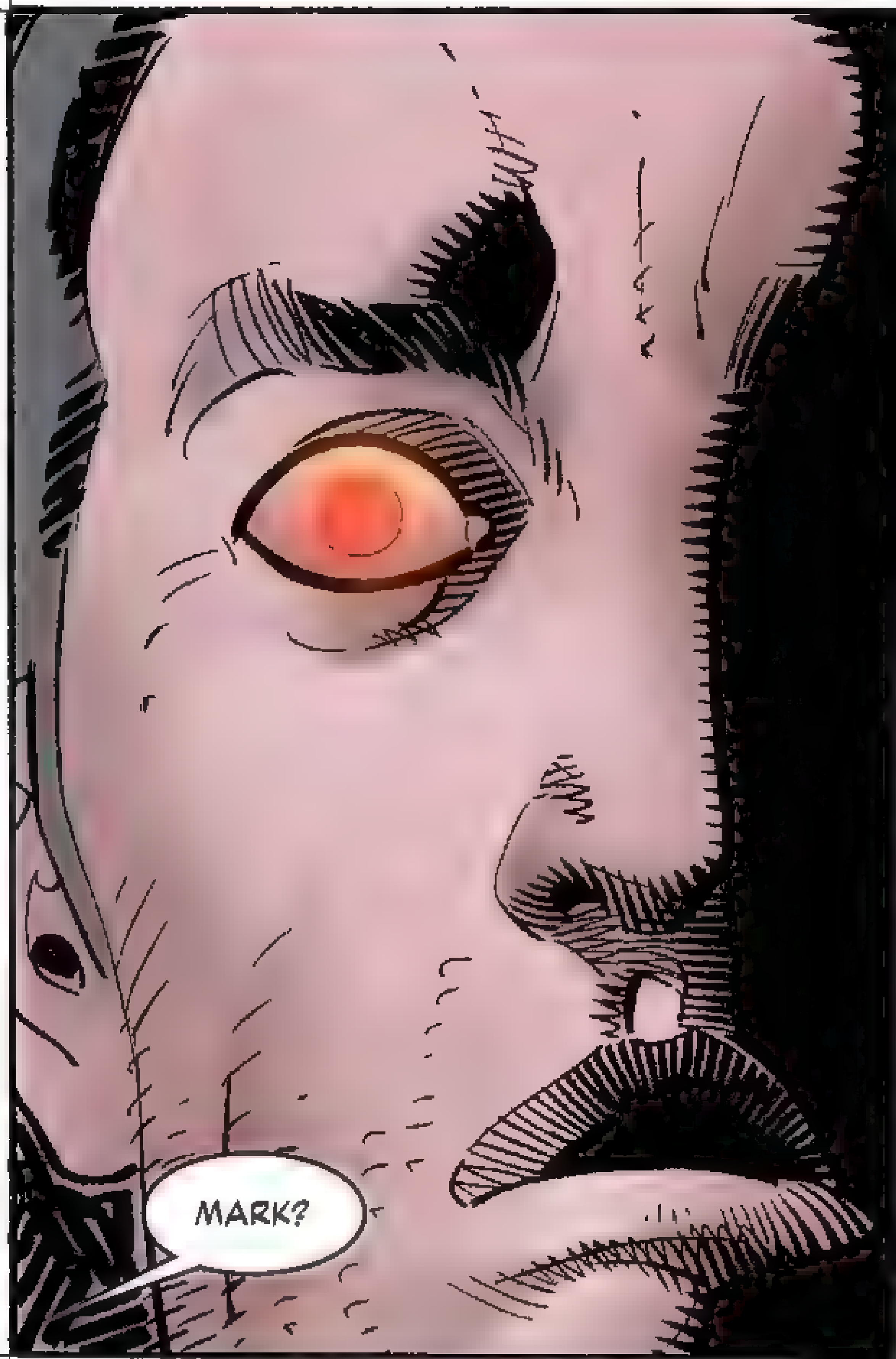

OFF.



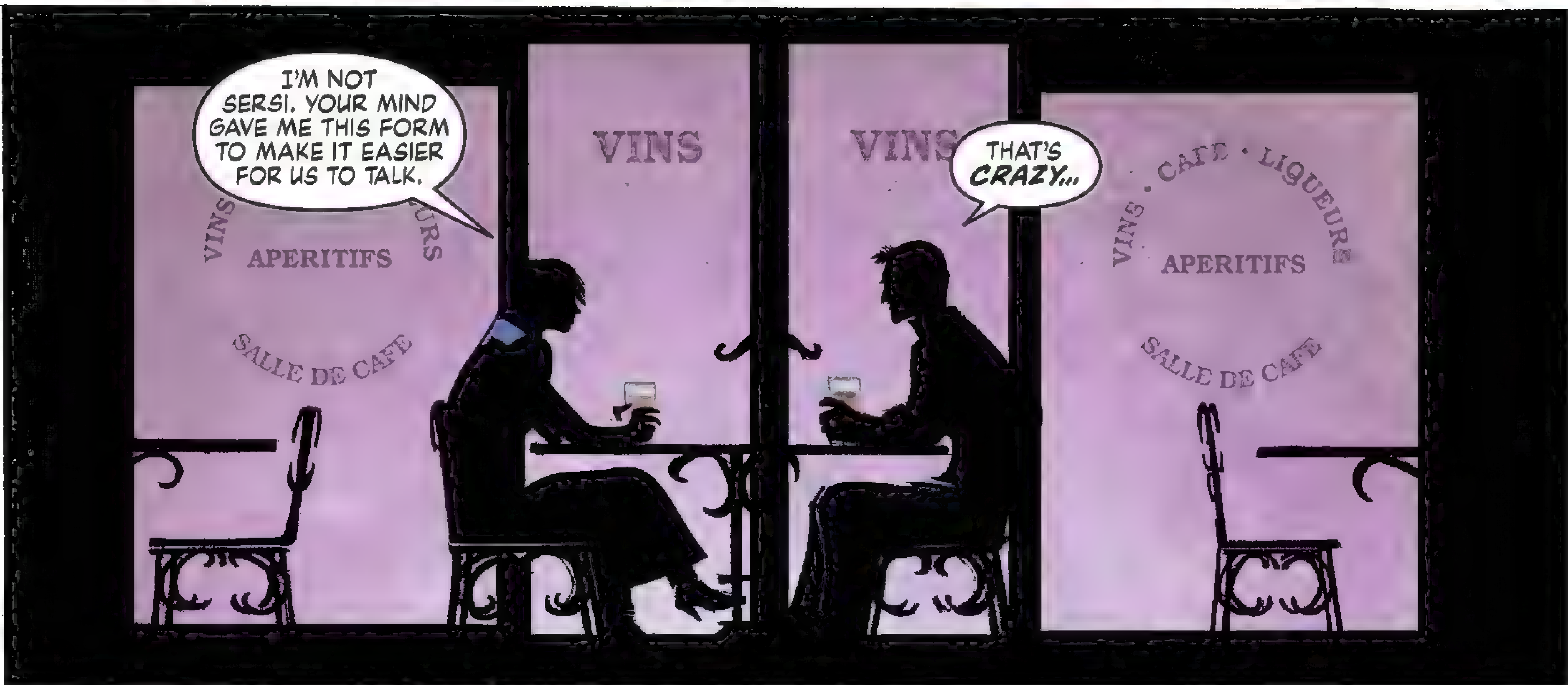


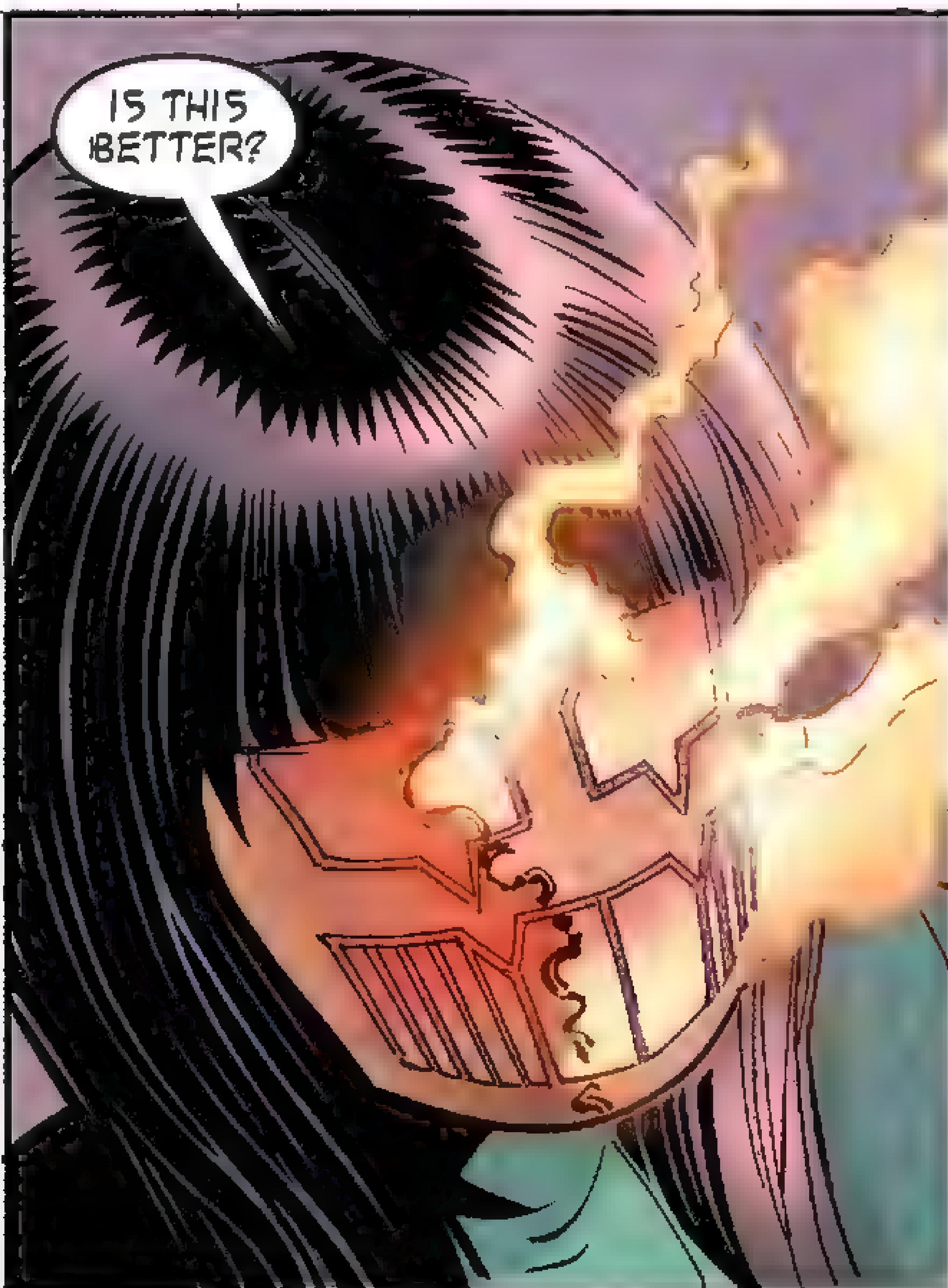

MARK?
NOT YOU, TOO. PLEASE HANG IN THERE.

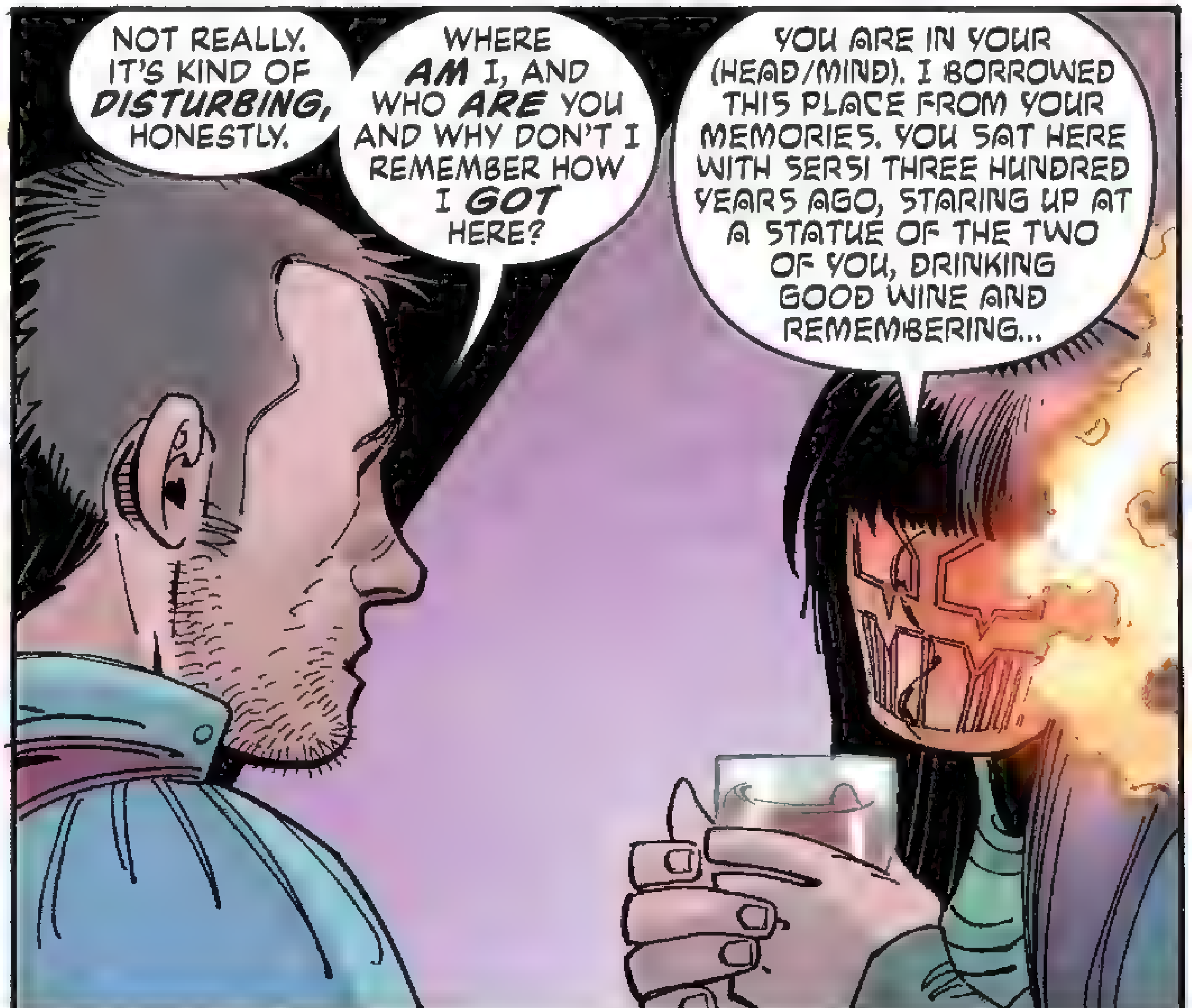

WHAT'S HAPPENING TO YOU? MARK...?

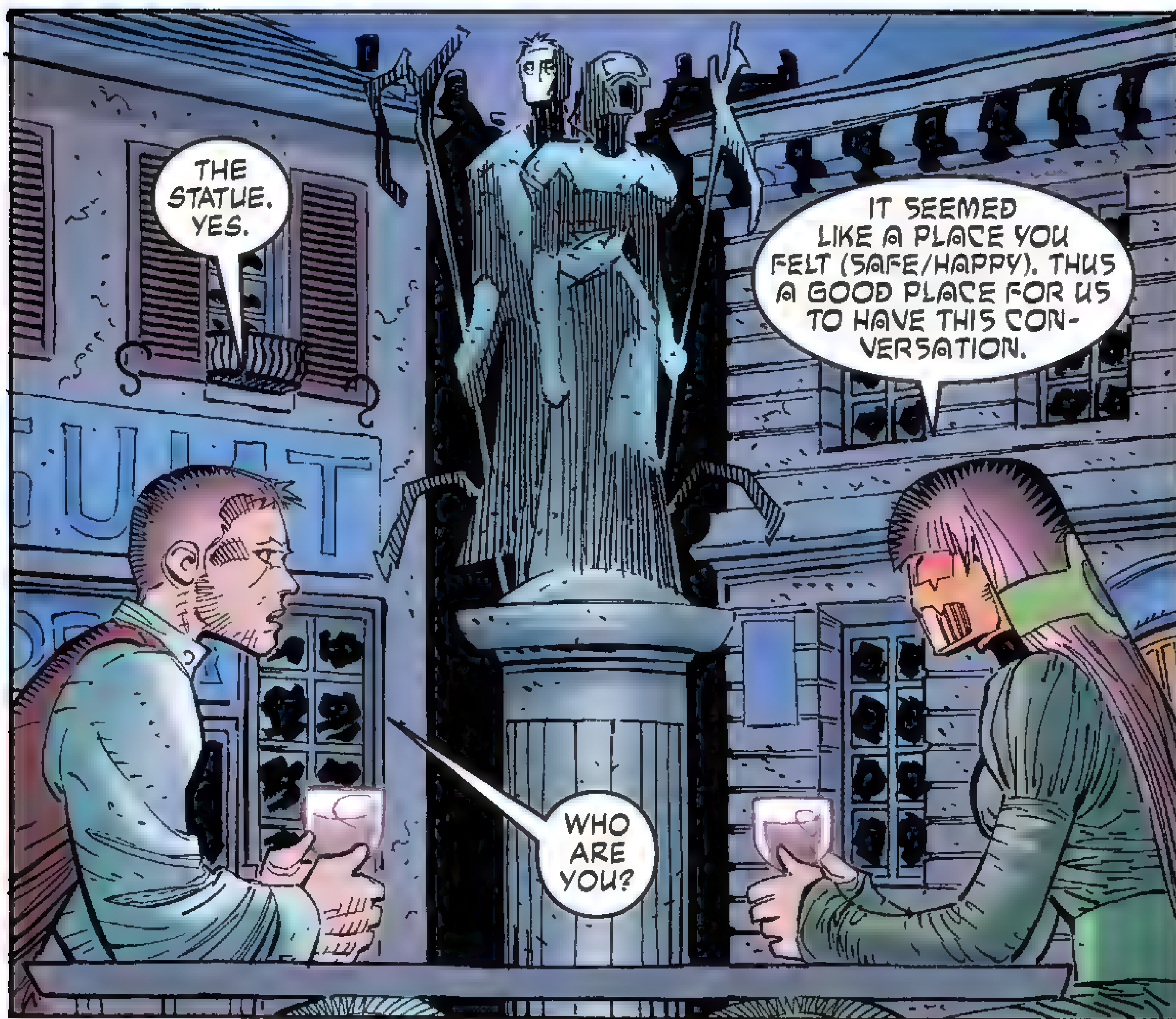

MARK?

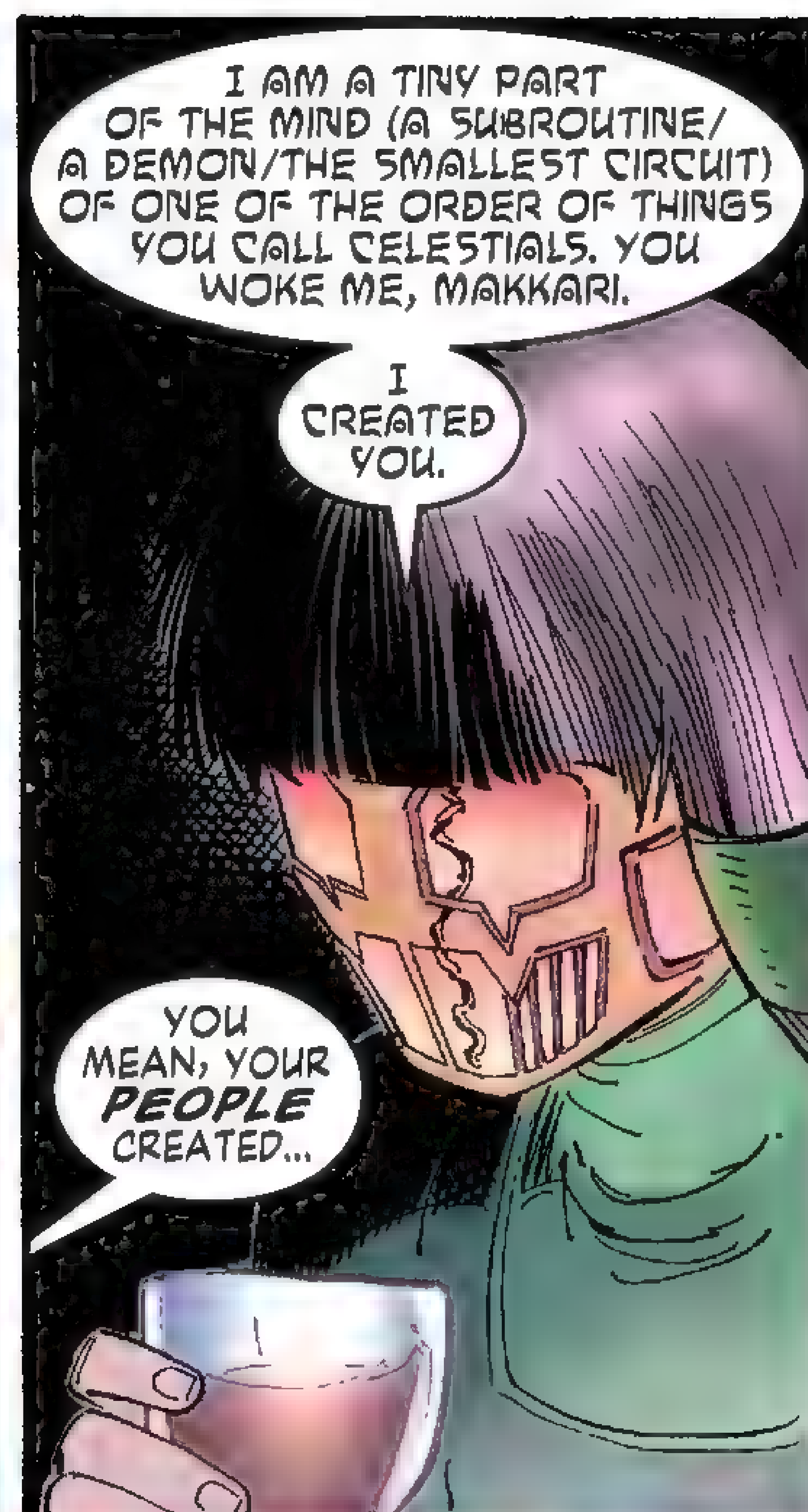

VINS · CAFE · LIQUEURS
APERITIFS
SALLE DE CAFE
MARK CURRY. HOW ARE YOU FEELING?
MY HEAD HURTS. I FEEL LIKE I JUST PULLED AN ALL-NIGHTER IN THE WARDS, AND THEN WENT OUT AND GOT STINKING DRUNK.
SERSI? HOW DID WE GET HERE?


I'M NOT SERSI. YOUR MIND GAVE ME THIS FORM TO MAKE IT EASIER FOR US TO TALK.
VINS
VINS
THAT'S CRAZY...
APERITIFS
SALLE DE CAFE
VINS · CAFE · LIQUEURS
APERITIFS
SALLE DE CAFE


IS THIS BETTER?


NOT REALLY. IT'S KIND OF DISTURBING, HONESTLY.
WHERE AM I, AND WHO ARE YOU AND WHY DON'T I REMEMBER HOW I GOT HERE?
YOU ARE IN YOUR (HEAD/MIND). I BORROWED THIS PLACE FROM YOUR MEMORIES. YOU SAT HERE WITH SERSI THREE HUNDRED YEARS AGO, STARING UP AT A STATUE OF THE TWO OF YOU, DRINKING GOOD WINE AND REMEMBERING...



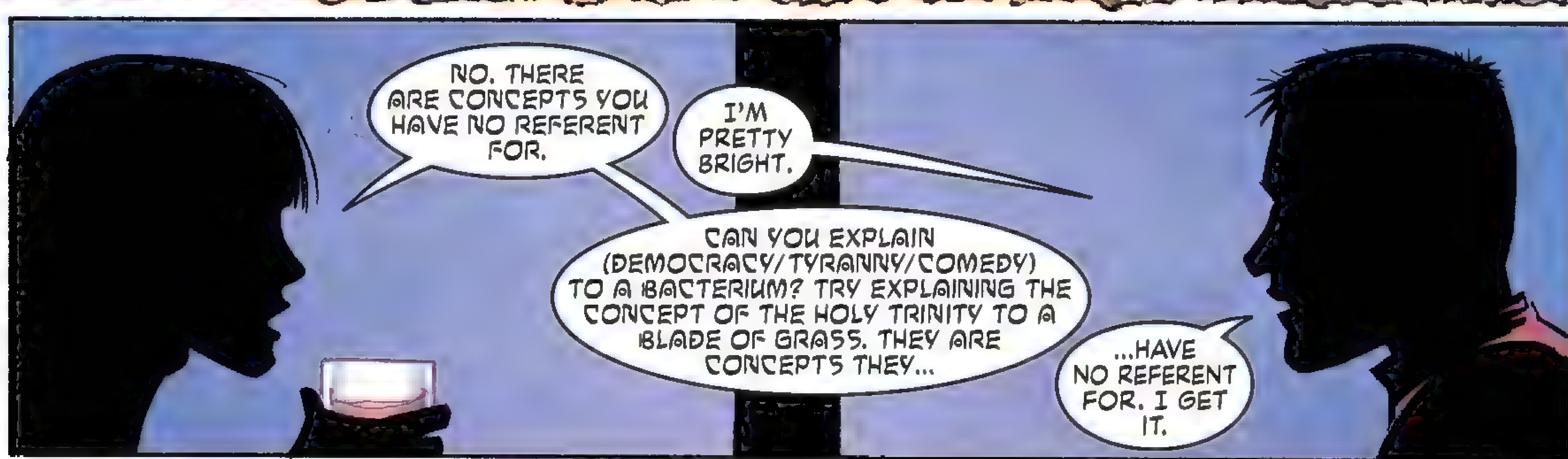


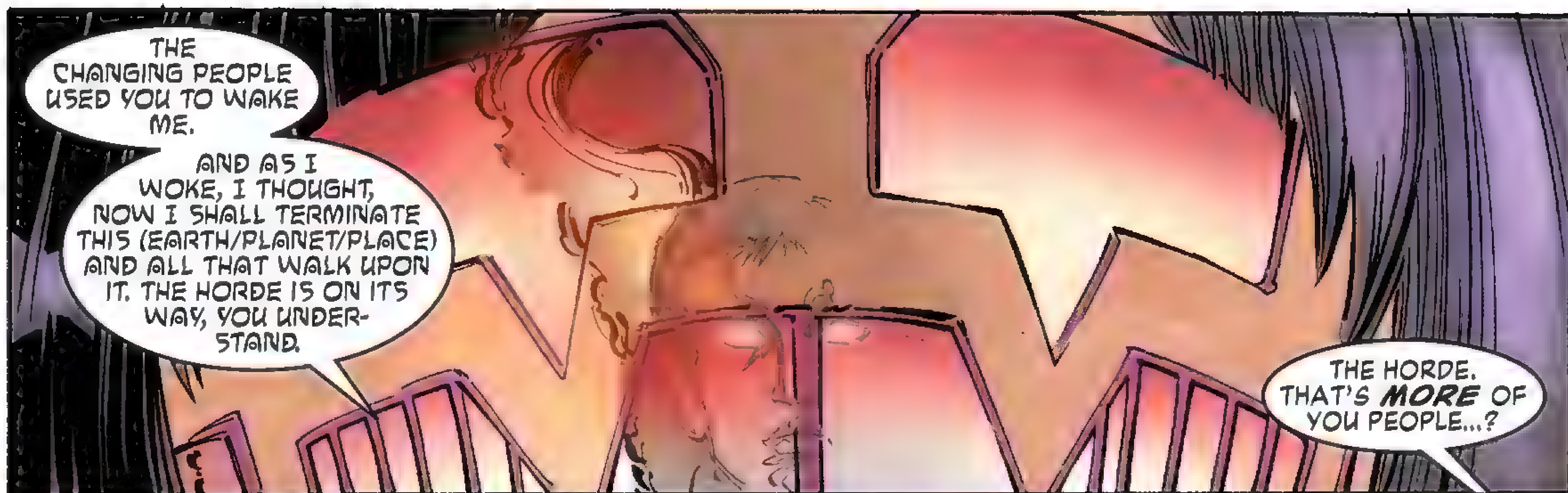
“NO. I DID IT, PERSONALLY. I WANTED TO (DESIGN/ CONSTRUCT) ONE OF YOU FOR SPEED. I BUILT SEVERAL OTHER INTERESTING FEATURES INTO YOUR *DNA* STRUCTURE.”

“WHY DID THE OTHER CELESTIALS PUT YOU TO SLEEP?”

“YOU WOULDN'T UNDERSTAND.”

“*TRY* ME.”





"NO. THE HORDE ARE THE (LOCUSTS) OF THE UNIVERSE. AND NOW I AM AWAKE, THEY ARE COMING.

"BUT THE UNIVERSE IS LARGE. EVEN AT TRANSLIGHT SPEEDS, IT WILL TAKE THEM SOME TIME TO GET HERE.

"MAKKARI, THERE ARE (THINGS/CONCEPTS/EVENTS) I DO NOT UNDERSTAND. AND I UNDERSTAND EVERYTHING..."





NO. READ YOUR BIBLE. THEY WILL NOT MAKE IT EASY FOR YOU. OR BELIEVE YOU.

YOU WILL GO BACK, WITH A MESSAGE TO ALL THREE OF THE PEOPLES OF EARTH. TO THE HUMANS, AND TO THE ETERNALS AND TO THE CHANGING PEOPLE.

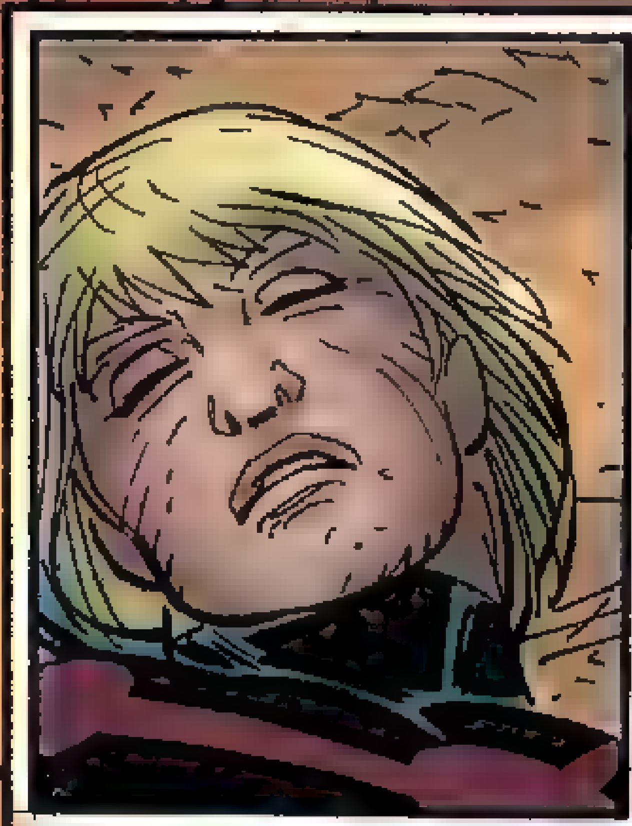
TELL THEM THAT I AM (AWAKE/ALIVE/ MONITORING).

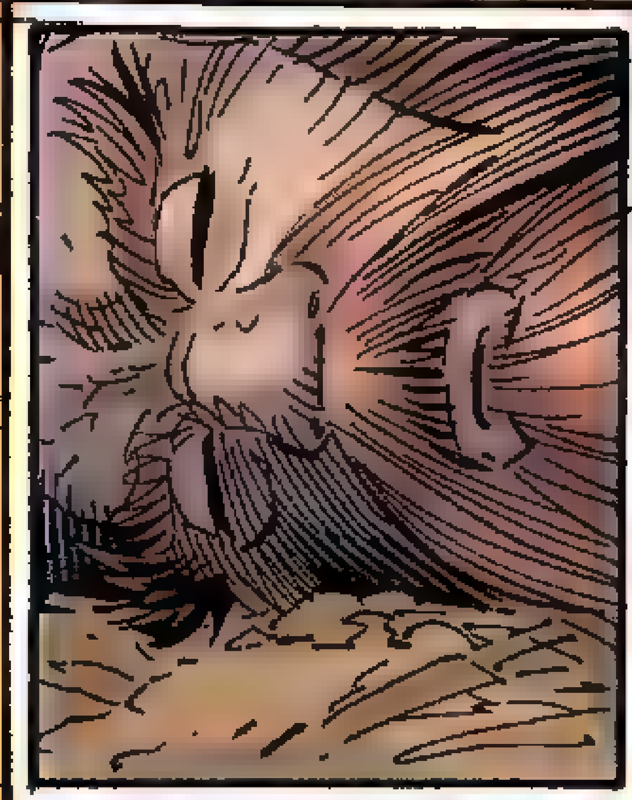
THAT I WILL (WATCH/LISTEN), AND THAT ONCE I HAVE SEEN ENOUGH, I SHALL JUDGE.

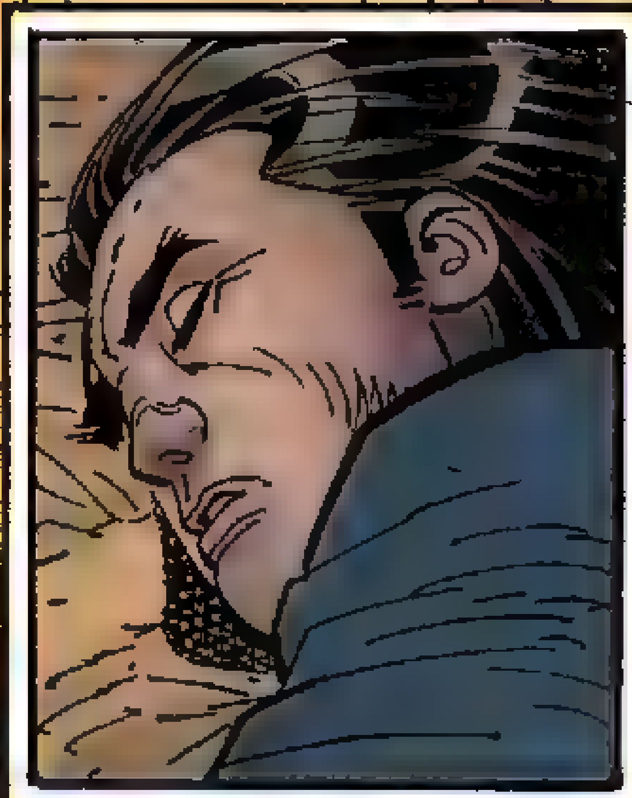
AND TELL THEM THIS...



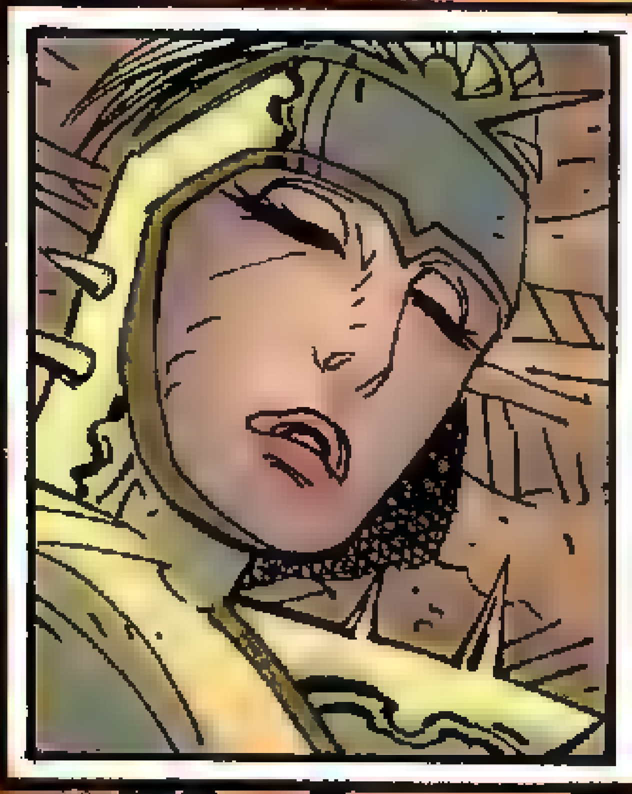
WHEN THE LAST SHADOW FALLS, I WILL PRONOUNCE MY JUDGMENT.

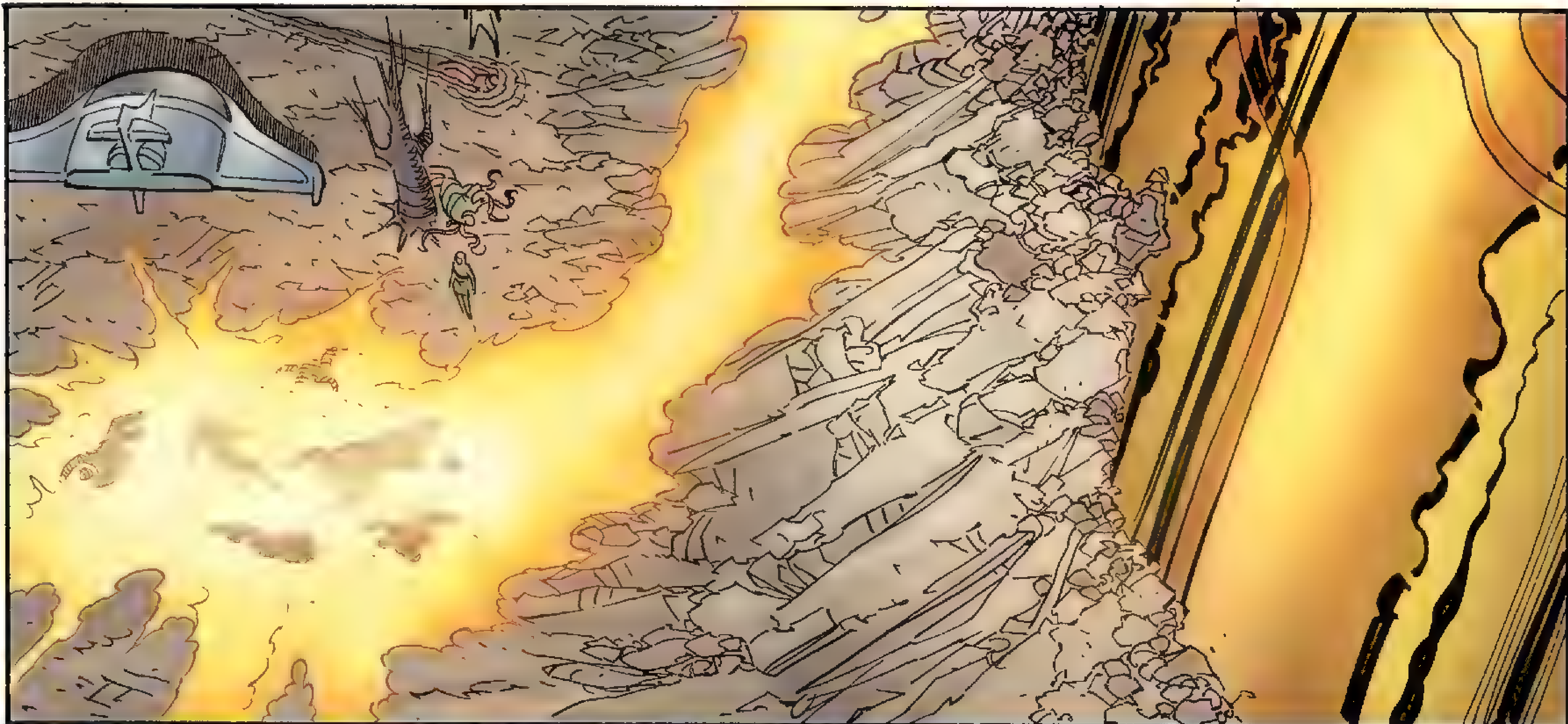


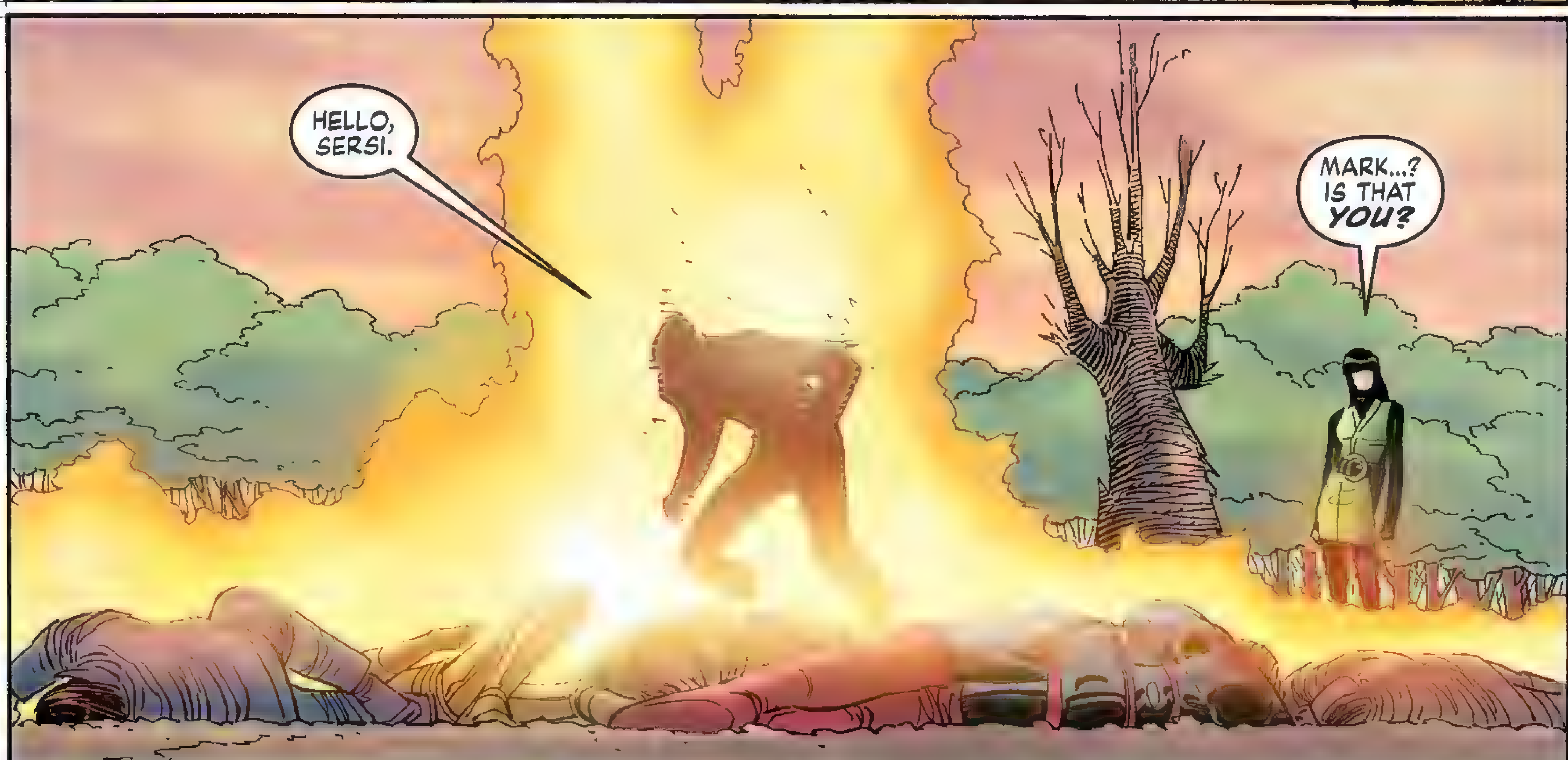








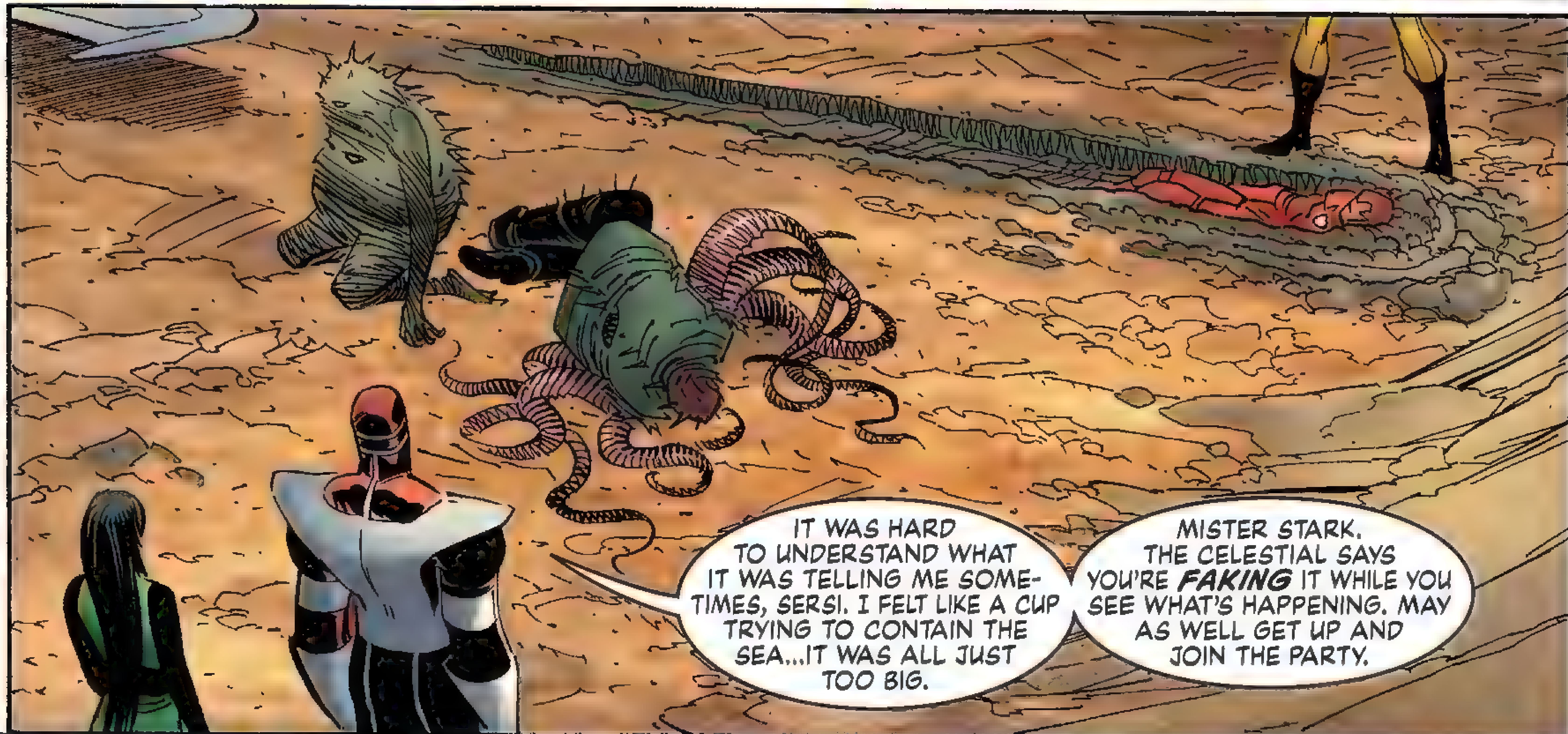



HELLO, SERSI.
MARK...? IS THAT YOU?


WHEN IT HAS SEEN ENOUGH, IT WILL JUDGE. JUDGE THE EARTH, I THINK. MAYBE JUDGE THE PEOPLE ON IT, BUT THAT DIDN'T SEEM TO BE WHAT IT MEANT.
THE TREE. CAN YOU CHANGE IT BACK?


I THINK SO. LET'S FIND OUT.


I THANK YOU, SKADRACH. I AM IN YOUR DEBT. A LIFE FOR A LIFE.


IT WAS HARD TO UNDERSTAND WHAT IT WAS TELLING ME SOME-TIMES, SERSI. I FELT LIKE A CUP TRYING TO CONTAIN THE SEA...IT WAS ALL JUST TOO BIG.
MISTER STARK. THE CELESTIAL SAYS YOU'RE FAKING IT WHILE YOU SEE WHAT'S HAPPENING. MAY AS WELL GET UP AND JOIN THE PARTY.

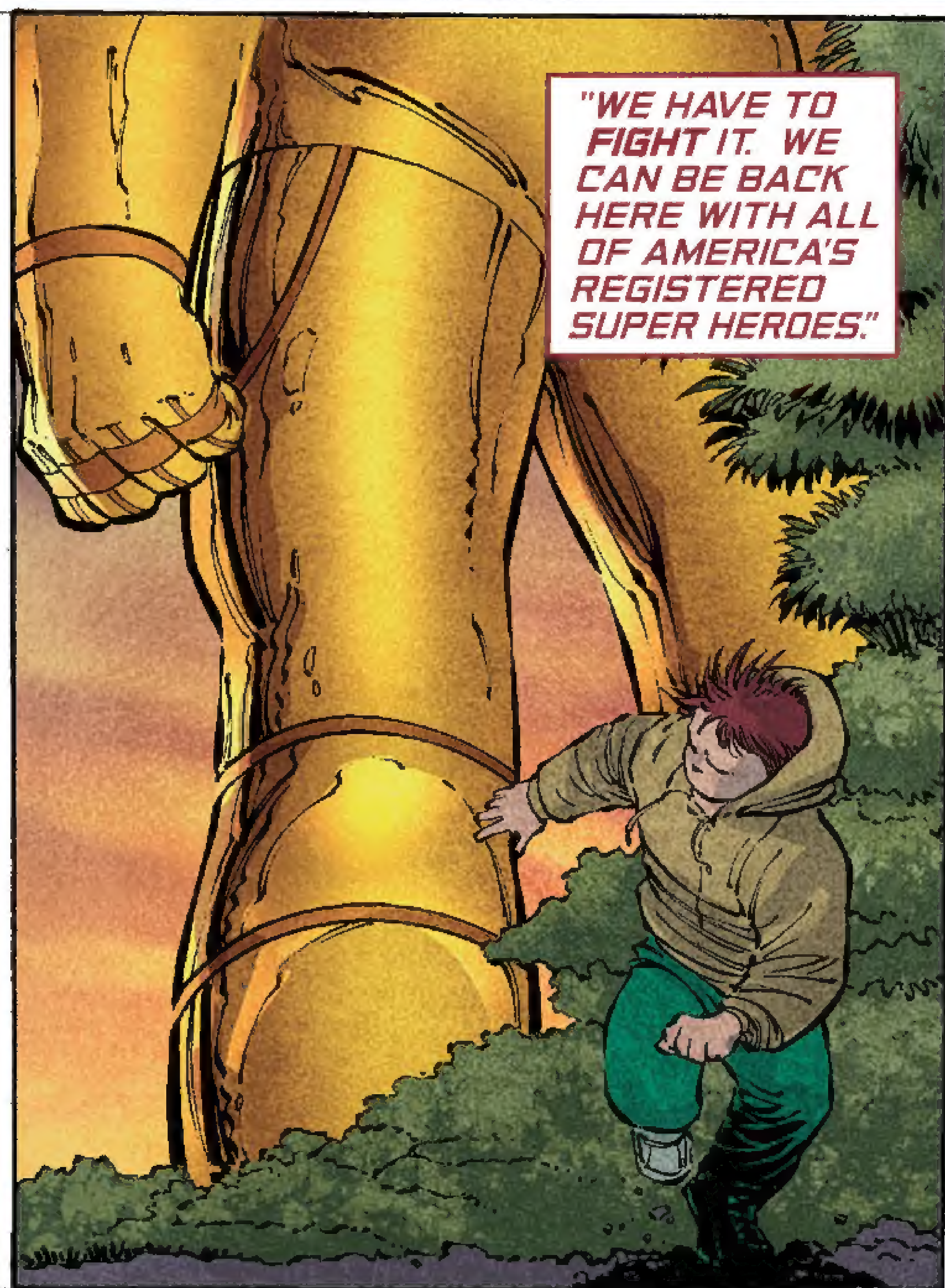



THEY CAN DO MIND-CONTROL STUFF, TOO, TONY.
I SAW, HANK.

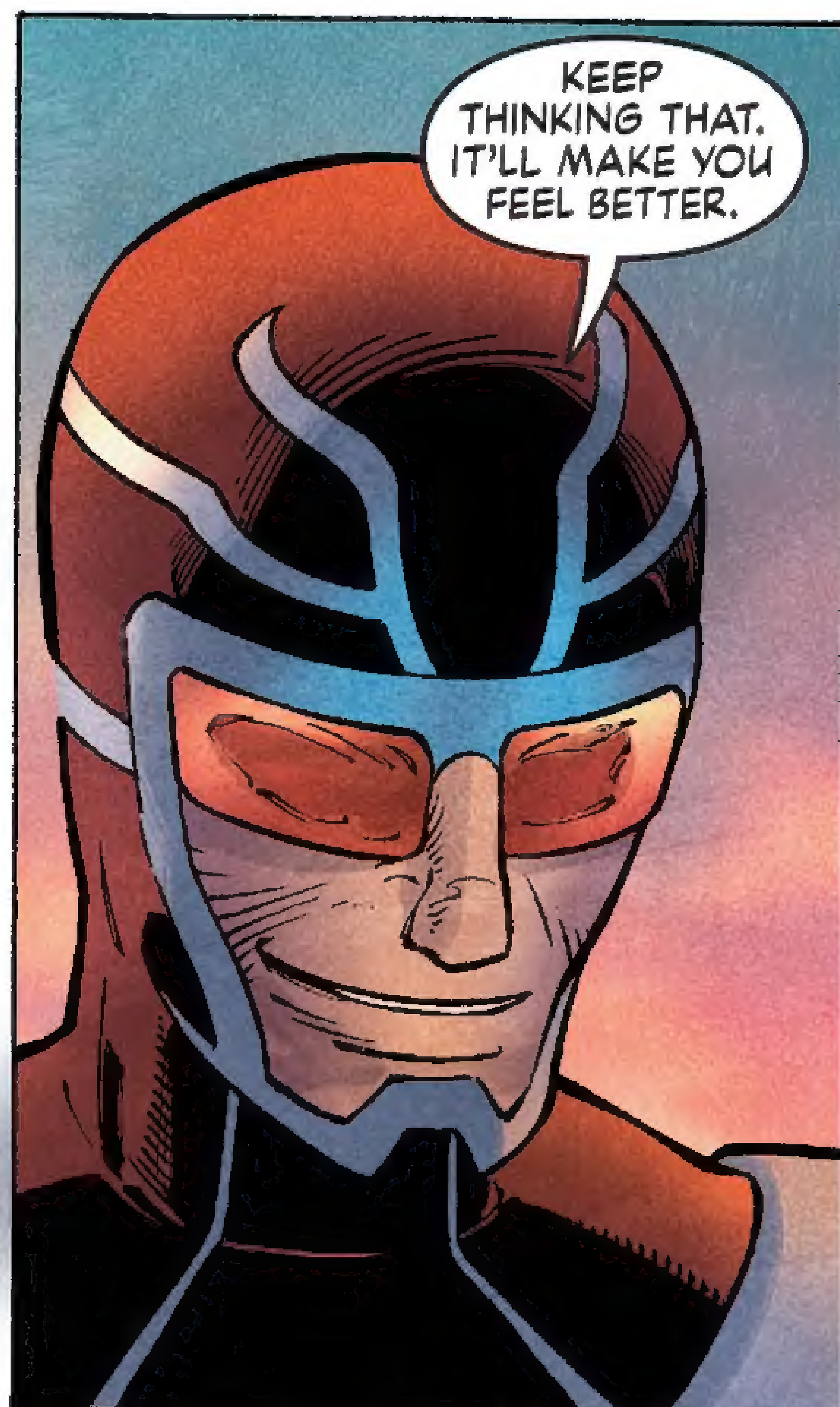

DO YOU THINK YOU CAN FIX HIM, SERSI?
I DON'T KNOW. HE TOOK AN EYE-BLAST FULL ON.
TRY. JUST TELL HIS CELLS TO REGENERATE THEMSELVES.


DOES THIS THING REALLY HAVE THE ABILITY TO DESTROY THE WORLD?
CERTAINLY.
WE HAVE TO FIGHT IT. WE HAVE TO REMOVE IT.


NO.
IT WILL REMAIN HERE, IN THE PARK.
IT WILL NOT BE DISTURBED. NOT BY YOU. NOT BY ANYONE.


"WE HAVE TO FIGHT IT. WE CAN BE BACK HERE WITH ALL OF AMERICA'S REGISTERED SUPER HEROES."

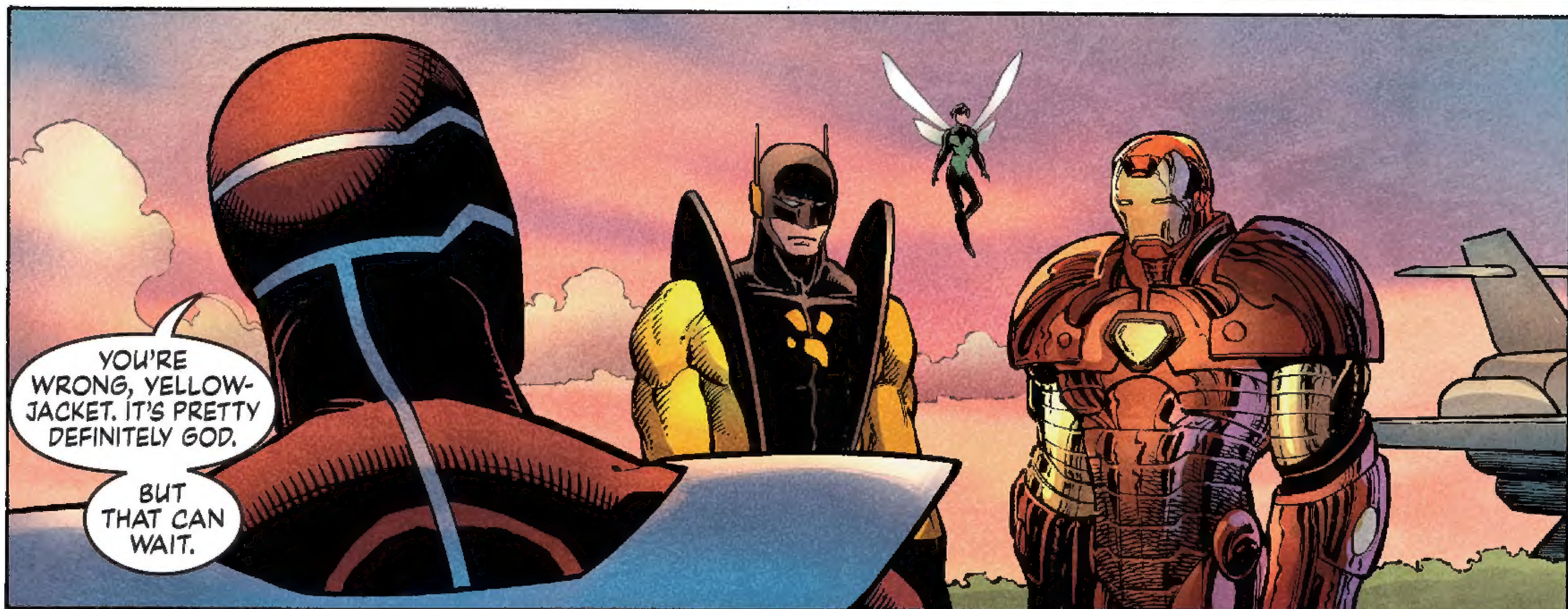

IT CAN'T STOP ALL OF US.
WE'VE FOUGHT ALIENS BEFORE.
DOESN'T MATTER. YOU CAN'T HURT IT. YOU CAN'T EVEN AFFECT IT. YOU CAN'T DO ANYTHING TO IT IT DOESN'T WANT YOU TO DO.
LISTEN. IT'S JUST AN ALIEN SPACE ROBOT. IT'S NOT GOD.

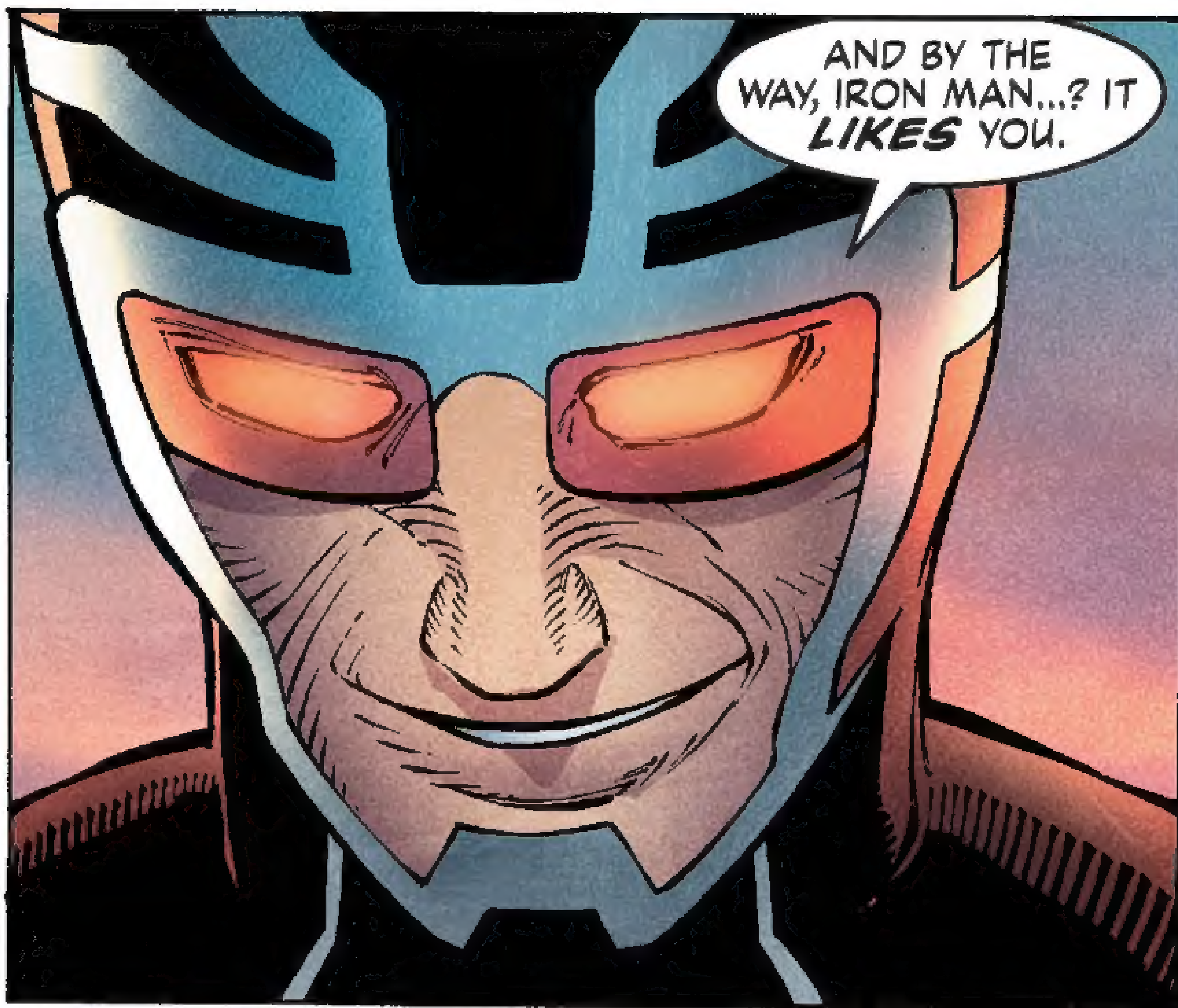

KEEP THINKING THAT. IT'LL MAKE YOU FEEL BETTER.

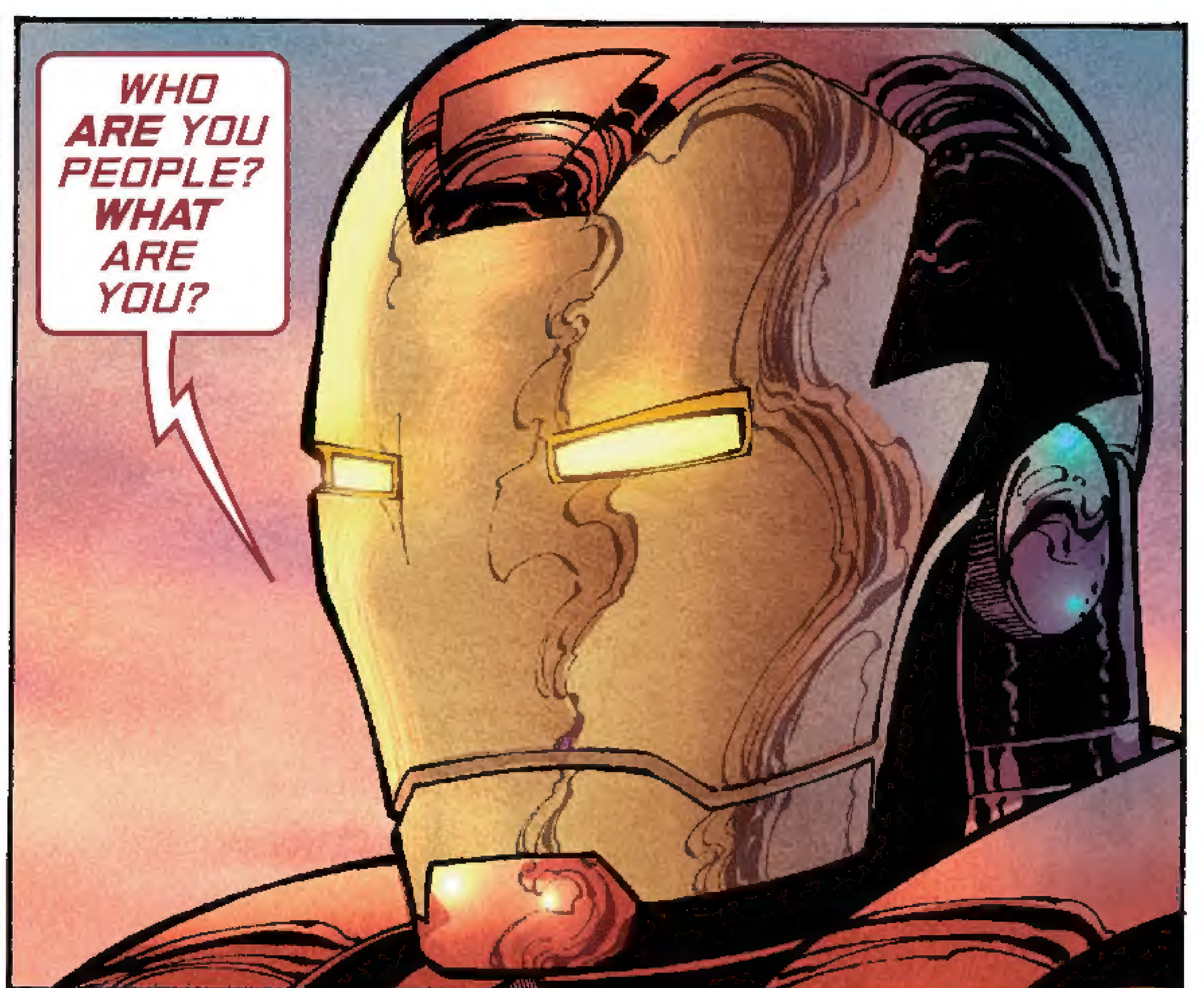

I'VE DONE ALL I CAN, MARK. I THINK IT'S DEAD...


HEAL.


Truly, you are Skadrach. This one's life will be spent in your service.
YOUR LIFE IS YOUR OWN, GELT. TAKE BETTER CARE OF IT THIS TIME.

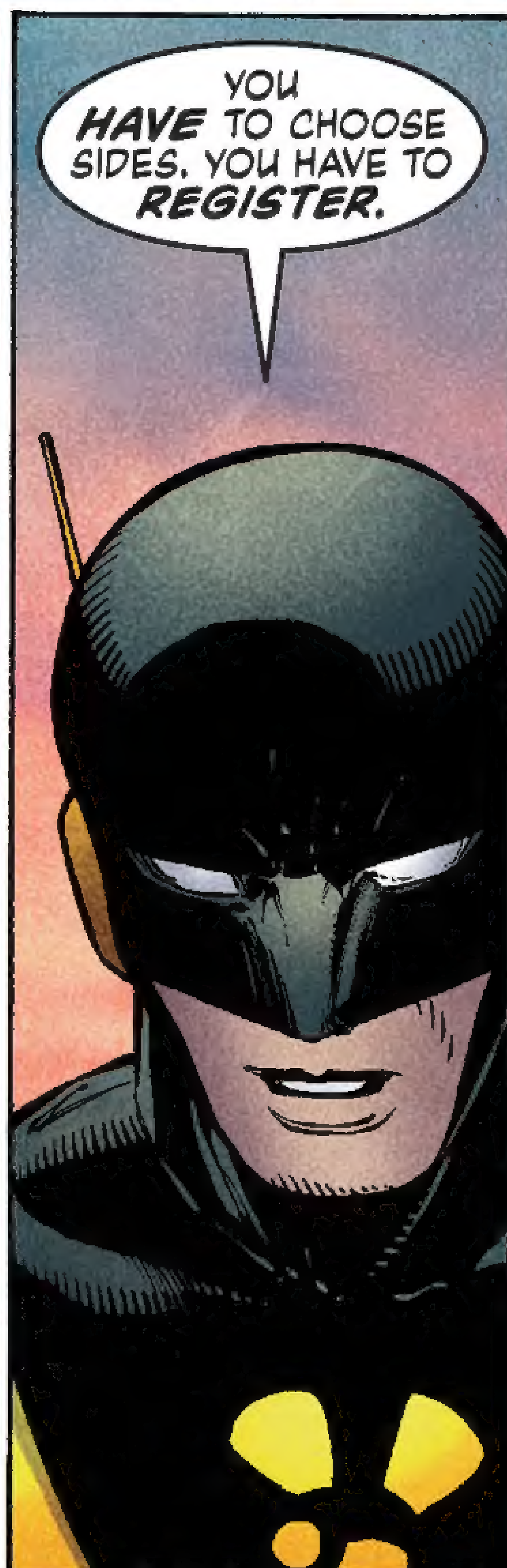

YOU'RE WRONG, YELLOW-JACKET. IT'S PRETTY DEFINITELY GOD.
BUT THAT CAN WAIT.

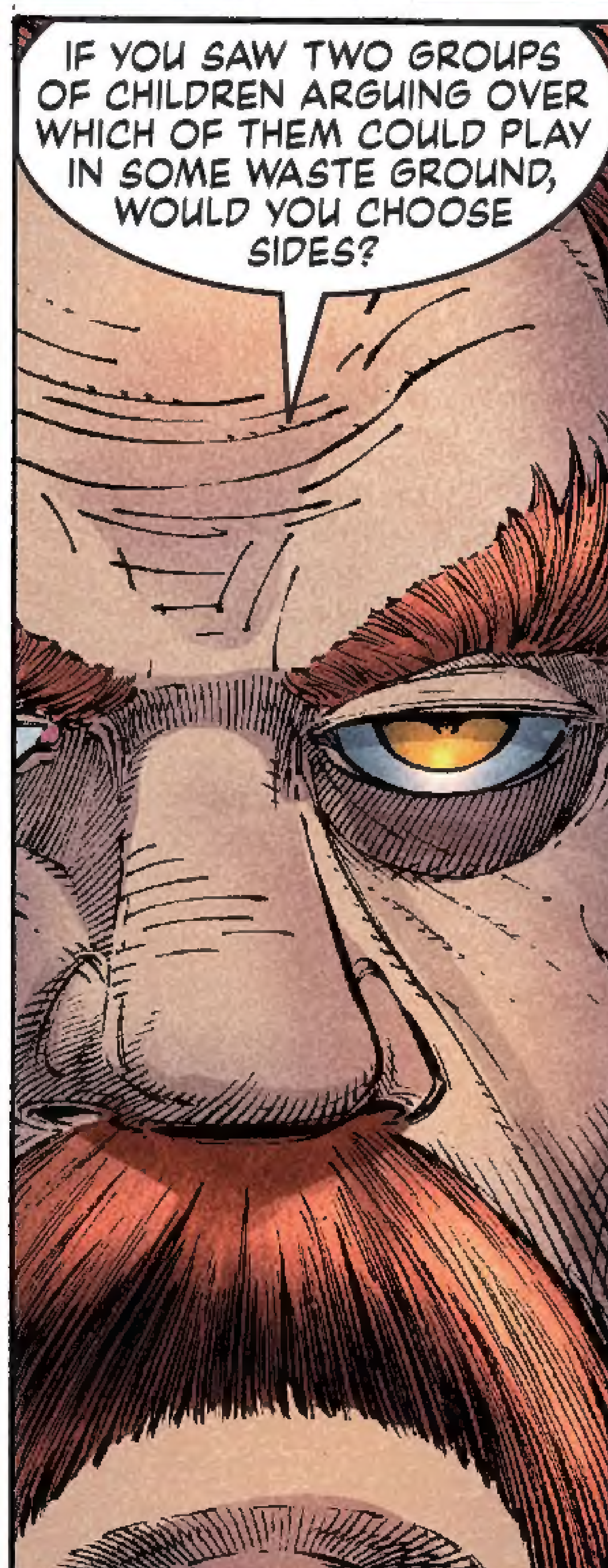














TO BE CONCLUDED...





ZONE